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ABSTRACT

Perspectives on the literature teacher's role and appropriate subject matter, educational objectives, and instructional methods are considered in light of campus unrest that occurred in the late 1960s at San Francisco State University. The value of studying works of literature in a time of violence and psychic numbing is addressed, and possible ways of teaching literature that would examine various elements of human experience, ranging from compassion to depersonalization, are questioned, and reference is made to the significance of the European Holocaust. American novelists and literature are cited relative to the question of how the experience of art can be used to promote student growth and development. The interest in Thoreau, Melville, and Faulkner during the period of social upheaval is analyzed. The needs of black and other minority students and changes in curricula and admission criteria, the personal experience of violence during the protests, and the social concern about the conditions in society, and largely the Vietnam War, are considered. The teacher's position in openly examining whether change is needed within the college, and the traditional right to peaceful public protest and honest dissent are examined. The issue of academic freedom in regard to the college president's instructions to faculty not to discuss the Indo-China War in the classroom is noted. It is suggested that the study of literature can help promote understanding of the human condition and, that for a literature teacher, a personal goal is to teach the importance of being human. (SW)

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TAKING THE RADICAL RISK:

Diary of a San Francisco State Professor

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MESSENGERS FROM THE DEAD: LITERATURE OF THE HOLOCAUST

HERE I AM: A JEW IN TODAY'S GERMANY

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for my Mother
and the memory of
my Father

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PREFACE

May 1973: The excitement, the contagion, for which, before the strike, San Francisco State was justly famous, has died. A quiet campus-- legacy of the Hayakawa era. Hayakawa the folk hero who twirled his Tam O'Shanter before newspaper photographers and TV cameras, called in the police, smashed the student-faculty strike, smashed Anarchy and Revolution, brought Reason and Order to the campus. I kept hoping that our hero would leave us, pass on to retirement.

Yet despite the continuing fallout from those turbulent days in 1968-69, I continue to see bright, questioning, likeable students in my classrooms, and I continue to enjoy teaching. The atmosphere of my meetings with students is generally relaxed and congenial. They do a good share of the talking; I am content to lean back and listen. Listening not from behind a professional manner as I used to do, but more like an older colleague, one who can openly admit to having the same kinds of painful ambiguities that trouble them. What's happened to the pedagogue whose inclination it was to over-control discussions? Well, he's controlling less and enjoying more. And withal, the "study" of literature does not appear to be suffering.

I don't understand where our students get the courage and endurance to stay in school even though the employment prospects before most of them are bleak; many of them will have to accept jobs as cashiers, store clerks, laundry helpers. Still, they do not pant for Doomsday. And in a darkening climate of post-Watergate malaise, for them to stay in school, to keep meeting their responsibilities as students, to keep holding on to even a

semblance of "good faith" is nothing less than remarkable.

Four years later, I reread my diary on the strike. It seems to me that I have been emerging from that lingering nightmare with a clearer understanding of the way things are on this campus. Yes, the education of a middle-aged, fairly square academic who has been schooled in the apprenticeship of "taking the radical risk."

I

ON THE FACULTY LINE

November 20, 1968: The middle-aged, short-haired, conservatively attired professor is standing face to face with the Tac Squad. The police grip their nightsticks tensely. These weapons can tear open the scalp, or worse. So what am I doing here?

Is this really happening? Not on a TV screen? Or the pages of a newspaper? But actually on campus, off to one side of the Administrative and Humanities buildings?

Beside me the faces of colleagues reveal the fear that must be clearly visible on mine. At any moment, the students, the ones who are carrying ON STRIKE placards, may begin throwing things, and then the police will certainly charge through our ranks. If that happens, some of us on this faculty line may get hurt. As it is, these police are itching to get at us for having interposed ourselves between them and the demonstrating students.

Just to look at the phalanx of blue-helmeted and plastic-visored Tac Squaders is enough to make one's blood freeze. Almost uniformly, their bodies are thickset, bulging with muscles, restless for action. Now their eyes are lacklustre, though I have seen them come to life when their clubs began to flail heads.

It is not difficult to adduce what they think of us, this handful of faculty, arms interlinked, standing before them like doomed men against a firing-squad wall. We have reason to believe that they see us as smart-ass professors, fairies, commies, trouble-makers, nigger lovers. It is not inconceivable that at least one of them is thinking: "You'll get it

one of these days. We'll knock your goddamn heads in and give you a squirt of mace in the eyes. We'll see how you like it when your professor ass is spread-eagled on a paddy-wagon floor..."

It is not more than ten minutes since I got on this line. Earlier, arriving on campus, I at once saw, from a distance, some faculty standing between the police and students. Their presence was surprising, because these particular men are characteristically adverse to assuming such a stance. But many students have been savagely beaten these past days, and apparently these faculty have been shaken enough to risk confronting the police.

My first impulse was to turn back, get out of sight before any of my friends on the line could spot me. Why borrow trouble? Besides, I didn't know what the whole thing was about. After all, the striking students had been warned that their shouting and chanting was disturbing classes. So maybe the police were in the right, and faculty members ought not to be interfering.

But then I thought: Remember your professions as a student of the Holocaust, professor? Remember what you have written and spoken on the importance of speaking out, taking a stand, being visible? All those soaring words about Courage, Commitment? Well, now some of your friends are on that line. Would you duck out, let them take the risk? Remember the words from E.M. Forster's "Two Cheers for Democracy" that you are so fond of quoting to students? Something to the effect that if you had to choose between your friends and your country, you hope you would have the guts to choose your friends. Well then, do it!

Slowly I go to the faculty line and take a place. But not merely because my friends are on it. My action may also have its source in an

incident that occurred a week before, on the afternoon of November 13....

In the Commons area, a former black student of mine is standing on a bench and furiously hurling cafeteria trays at the police. Why is Moore, let us call him, doing that? He'll be arrested, dragged away. Someone cries out that members of the Black Students Union are being clubbed down. In the midst of all this chaos how is one to know if this report is accurate?

His face strained with rage, Moore is screaming obscenities at the police. One stands out clearly: "Kill the motherfuckers!" He used to speak so calmly, with exceptional composure and sophistication in that American literature class of a year ago. What has happened to set him off this way?

Now a young man perched on a roof of one of the huts used by student organizations calls down that black students are being taken away by the police to the Physical Education Building. "Let's go and liberate them," someone cries. That's all they need! I think glumly.

Still, though I can't condone the throwing of salt shakers, trays, bottles, stones, it was not the students who precipitated this latest campus melee. I was there, clearly saw how it began. Several police, without any visible cause for their action, appeared in the Commons area and took up a position directly outside the Black Students Union hut. If they had deliberately wanted to provoke violence, they couldn't have stood in a more explosive place. Why further enrage the black students? Perhaps the police had been mistakenly informed that troublemakers were in the vicinity of the B.S.U. hut. But then why continue to linger there when they could plainly see that no one was causing a disturbance? Given the melees and mass arrests that had been taking place on campus

for days, their presence could not help but trigger students, black and white, into shouting catcalls and obscenities.

"Pigs off campus!" voices shouted.

The police continued to stand there.

It came. Stones crashed through the air, struck one and then another of the officers, who flinched, gripped their nightsticks more tensely. Students rushing to the scene quickly swelled the crowd of onlookers until they completely surrounded the police, who panicked, charged and began striking out with their clubs. I saw one officer raise a pistol, as though preparing to fire.

At this point Moore leapt up on a bench near the Black Students Union hut and began flinging trays....

What do I know about Moore? Not much, really--and that is a telling admission. Once, I recall, he had spoken enthusiastically of Che Guevara, but I did not attempt to ascertain the reason for his admiration. I know nothing about his background, aspirations, his situation as a minority student. In short, he had been one of only three black students in my classes these past few years, and yet I had made no attempt to find out "where" he was.

Momentarily, I am transfixed by the sight of Moore, wild-eyed and perched on a bench as though it were a barricade. Then I begin to move toward him, wanting Moore to know that his former teacher of American literature, albeit white, is sympathetic to his cause. Suddenly an object crashes against my head. I am rocked, stunned, almost knocked off my feet.

Recovering, I take stock. Some small, hard object, probably a stone, had struck just below the right temple but done no more than bruise the

skin, draw a drop or two of blood.

"Why should this happen to an innocent bystander?" I hear myself thinking in outraged astonishment. "I've been hit--right in the temple--could have been killed..."

But the confusion is such that no one could have sympathized--even had they been so inclined--with the professor. Police are chasing students all over the Commons area. Some young people are on the ground, writhing with pain. Most of those who had been looking on are running, scattering in all directions. Many have already taken refuge in doorways and behind parked cars. Moore has jumped down from the bench and is running toward the Physical Education Building.

I hesitate (will the police identify me as merely a bystander?) and then begin moving slowly toward him. Why? Certainly not as a would-be protector. More likely, to see what was happening, to be the spectator.

Now, in the near distance, I see some young men spread-eagled on the ground and police astride them, the way cowboys sit nonchalantly upon the bulks of lassoed cattle. Vaguely, I recognize some of the victims, who are mostly black. They had been speaking on campus about the scores of minority youth waiting outside the college's gates, barred by admissions policies; and they had spoken out on the imperative need for more black faculty and black studies courses. It is these "troublemakers" that the police have singled out for harassment.

I remember Chaim Kaplan's last days in the Warsaw Ghetto, as he describes them in "Scroll of Agony". How he looked out of a window of his flat and saw a scene from Dante's Inferno: terrified men, women and children running, frantically trying to escape from the Germans and Polish police; Jews being rounded up and taken to the Umschlagplatz for transport

to "resettlement" places in the East. Some of the persecuted had lived in Warsaw for decades; it was their city. And yet they were being hunted down like animals.

The implied analogy is false? Granted, it would be obtuse to draw close comparisons between what is happening here and the horrors of the Holocaust; one does not compare hell with a single fire. At State, bodies were beaten with nightsticks; they were not turned into ashes. And yet the eyes, the faces of these black young spread-eagled on the ground, where had I seen them before? At first I couldn't remember...

I come now to a street in front of the Physical Education Building. Close by, Moore and several other black young men are furiously gesturing at the windows of the second floor, where the police reportedly are holding some students.

A young man beside Moore stoops and picks up something from the ground. A moment later a window on the second floor is shattered. Oh no! Must they add fuel to the complaints of the Law and Order criers? What do they hope to accomplish by smashing windows? Are they trying to say, symbolically, to the police: Look, we're real, we're real. Don't make abstractions of us. We're not "criminal anarchists" down here. We're flesh and blood, and we want a human response from you. Our brothers are up there. Let them go...

But do they have to break windows to communicate this? Why not give non-violence a chance?

Still, if it were necessary to choose between the window breakers and the watchers whose faces are now appearing in the windows of the adjacent building, I would unhesitatingly choose the former. For at least they are risking arrest out of loyalty to their comrades. The window

watchers risk nothing. They look down at Moore and the others with glazed faces.

(So too did millions of Europeans look on with refrigerated faces as Jews were dragged through the streets to the Umschlagplatzen. And then later, after the war, they would exculpate themselves in numbed, programmed voices: "We did not know what was happening...We did not know they were doing those terrible things to the Jews...")

Then a white student cries up at the spectators behind the windows. "Come down here! What are you doing there?"

"You tell them," I blurt out, thinking: Let them understand that they're not watching television, that frustration and fear and anger are happening in the street directly below them--while they watch, doing nothing...

The student looks at me as though to say: Tell them yourself.

"I'm on the faculty," I say clumsily, wanting him to agree that it wouldn't be appropriate for a professor to berate students, at least publicly.

He walks away, shrugging his shoulders. At me?

Moore can't be unaware that I am standing a few yards away from him, and yet he appears oblivious--or is it indifferent?--to my presence. Does he automatically view me as an adjunct of the white Establishment that has his brothers in custody? Doesn't he want my help?

He is speaking with some black young men about the police, gesturing with his hands to simulate the way they used their nightsticks, like barbers swiftly cutting hair. "They weren't fooling, the motherfuckers," he says, grinning, almost as though out of admiration.

I consider walking up to him and asking: What's this all about?

Why did they arrest those students? Why are they holding them in the P.E. Building? I want him to be assured of my good will. But very likely he would meet such foolish, guilt-edged questions with contempt. He doesn't have time for rapping with a white professor who isn't going to help him free his brothers.

Again there is the sound of glass shattering, and I look up to see another broken window in the building across the street. Almost immediately following this sound, as though they had been waiting for just such an incitement to move, police pour out of the building on the run and charge toward Moore and the others.

In my direction also! Terrified, I wheel and run. Running, I catch a glimpse of a colleague, one of the most distinguished on the faculty, moving before me. Both of us running like schoolboys who had just broken a neighbor's window with a baseball and were desperate to get out of sight before he could identify the culprits.

But I hadn't done anything wrong--had just been watching, observing. So why was I running away in this undignified way? A professor, after all, is not an outlaw. And it was, after all, my campus, the place where I, not these police, worked. Humiliating, humiliating...

"Don't run!" someone--perhaps Moore--cries.

But if I had stood still, the police might have struck me. Faculty had been beaten by the police during the 1967 disorders at Columbia U., had they not? In situations like this one, for the police there are no innocent bystanders. In their eyes, if I had been minding my own business, why would I have been standing near black students? Good citizens do not belong in the presence of those who are disrupting Law and Order. Moreover, I was running, therefore I must feel guilty. So that if I got hurt, they would contend that it had been my own fault.

It is only my own body I want to keep from being injured; what happens to Moore now does not really concern me. He'll have to look out for himself. Besides, shouldn't my first allegiance be to my family? What will happen to them if I land in the hospital?

A few minutes later, from the safety of a doorway behind the cafeteria, I look back and see Moore standing near the Student Health Service Building among a group of perhaps two dozen young men; they are completely surrounded by Tac Squaders. Slowly, step by step, the latter are closing in, narrowing the circle. The police look determined on mayhem; their victims-to-be look doomed. Why doesn't someone intercede? Why doesn't someone call off the police? I remain in the doorway, watching.

Then, miraculously, as though in response to an S.O.S. that somehow had reached them, thirty to forty faculty members, some of whom are in my department and are identifiable as members of the local American Federation of Teachers Union chapter, suddenly appear, swiftly pass my position in the doorway, and, without hesitation, move directly and in single file toward the police and their victims-to-be.

I sense what my colleagues are going to do, can see it on their faces, their eyes preternaturally bright, their jaws thrust forward, as though they were girding for a banzai charge. But will they actually interfere with the police, risk beating and arrest?

Even as they move on, I am saying to myself: Well, that's their choice, their politics. Being such a hero is not for me. Why should it be? I am, after all, an educator, not a bodyguard. What I am trained and paid to do is to purvey concepts, critical methods, and assorted academic exercises. I didn't get a Ph.D. in the art of confronting the Tac Squad.

The faculty group moves straight up to the police who, looking startled and confused, part ranks, leaving an opening which is at once penetrated by the "liberators." The professors come to a halt beside the encircled young men, who are wildly cheering their deliverers, looking at them with expressions of gratitude and awe.

I too am impressed by what my colleagues have just done. What made them do this? Why hadn't I had the courage to join them? Still, what's to be done? My style is my style...

Now someone calls the police off, and they begin to withdraw. Disciplined as ballet dancers, marvelously coordinated, they take two half-dancing steps backwards, pause, then take another two steps backwards, then pause again, and all the while without taking their eyes off the previously encircled young men or loosening their grips on the nightsticks, executing their retreat with precision and *éclat* until they reach a police wagon and shortly thereafter depart from the campus.

I make my way over the central lawn toward my office. Moore has disappeared. Has he been arrested or not? Where is he now? What must he think of his former teacher, this purveyor of the humanities, of all the loftiest sentiments thought and expressed by man? Where was this devotee of Truth and Beauty when the police were closing in on students? Would Moore be very surprised to hear that the professor had fled to a doorway for protection? Hardly. For, doubtless, he had long ago taken the measure of these Camus-and-Sartre, page-and-paragraph-citing, "existentially oriented," lib-e-ral teachers. True, a handful of faculty had just now put their bodies on the line. Even so, would they be there the next time? Moore wouldn't be counting on it.

Groups of young blacks are moving toward and past me. They approach

with averted faces, as though deliberately wanting to shut out my presence. Do I imagine this? Or, after what happened on campus today to black students, are they too enraged to look at my white skin?

Then all at once I recall where I have seen their faces before: in photographs taken during the Holocaust. Yes, Jews being led like cattle through the streets of European cities, their expressions similar to what was in the faces of these young blacks.

Belatedly, I am beginning to understand, to connect. When the cries of black students on campus first vaguely penetrated my ears a year ago, I felt removed. Their outrage did not reach beyond the peripheries of my consciousness. I considered myself innocent of contributing to their plight. Like a good, prudent academician, I carefully positioned myself, calibrated what I might say and do in their behalf, weighed professional consequences.

But now, day by day, the tumult comes closer as more students are beaten, arrested. From the past of the Hitler years, I recall dim faces that collage with the eyes of Moore and of other black students I have observed today. Now I seem to recognize those who are moving toward and past me. Especially their eyes. Yes, Jews of today. Whose black skin is their yellow star--and before whom I have been an "innocent" German spectator.

Almost thirty years later we scorn the "we didn't know what was happening" public statements of older generation Germans. Perhaps many of them did not. Still, when witnessing the hideous harassment of Jews--and such harassment in the streets of German cities during the Third Reich era was not uncommon--how many of these "innocent" spectators attempted to help the victims?

A generation later how many of our faculty went to the aid of students who were being beaten by police? Only a handful. Mainly we said to ourselves: Be rational, neutral, don't borrow white guilt, white middle-class masochism. So in the end we remained passive witness to the students' humiliation. Claiming innocence, we were the good Germans "who did not know".

* * *

But return to November 20 and the faculty standing before the Tac Squad. A week ago I had hovered in a doorway while Moore and the others were encircled by the police. Now a police photographer is taking pictures of the faculty who are shielding the student demonstrators. For future reference? To be added to files containing information on radical elements who are tearing down the fabric of our society?

My first impulse is to look away, turn my back on the photographer and pretend to be looking at the antiseptically white garden apartments and high-rise towers of the middle-class development bordering the campus. I don't want to be identified by the college administration as a dissident; step too far out of line and one's job could be in jeopardy. Safer to be anonymous and invulnerable among the onlookers watching us, the police and the uninvolved faculty.

Still, a less fearful part of me thinks: So be it. As a student of the Holocaust, I have lectured and written on the achievements of such courageous men as Probst Heinrich Greuber of Berlin, Maximilian Kolbe, Bernard Lichtenberg and Eduardo Focherini, all of whom had spoken out against what the Third Reich was doing to Jews. Recall, too, the photographs of Martin Luther King as he stood enclasping the hands of his colleagues in the streets of Montgomery, Chicago, Memphis. Surely these men had

replied "Here I am" to the immemorial question, "Where are you?"

Standing beside colleagues and friends, I don't feel heroic. They must be feeling shaky also. I would like to believe that we will draw strength from one another, from the conviction that we are acting out of principle. I feel more afraid than principled.

The police photographer continues to grind his camera. Let him. I look--but not without trepidation--straight into the camera, thinking: here we are, here we are...But this mental exercise doesn't diminish my fear of the police, whose visors are practically jutting into our faces.

To a colleague on my right, a man who can hardly be described as a faculty dissident but who, like the others on the line, wants the beating of students halted, I say, "Temperamentally, I'm not suited for this kind of life. I'm much more comfortable in a study or library."

"I know," he says wryly. "But that's where we're at."

"Say, what's your guess as to when all this will end?" I start to ask him when a police helicopter, as though in response, appears over the campus and begins noisily circling, circling.

I reflect on where we who are on this faculty line have come from, to where we are now; back to the time when professors like myself were "comfortable" on the job. Specifically, back to the Spring of 1960, the approaching end of the Eisenhower days, a season of roseate serenity at San Francisco State. No Tac Squads, melees, helicopters. And the students, the short-haired, untroubled students from homes with spotlessly manicured sidewalks and lawns, coming to the fields of Academe for Kultur, a bit of knowledge, just enough to Get Ahead, to "fit into" society. So polite and filled with middle-class benevolence. Doctor, they called me.

No, it didn't take much sweat to be the teacher then. One held forth easily, without fear of being challenged on one's pronouncements concerning Art, Imagination, Beauty. Who was to gainsay such a benign atmosphere? Certainly not the taxpayers of the State; they were content to believe that professors knew what was best for their children.

Look back now to a few of those innocent days in March 1960.

II

THE PINCH OF ART

The situation: a Basic Communications class. Observe the neatly groomed and suburban-clothed young men and women sitting in the room. Very unlikely that any of them has been inside a flat in the local ghettos-- but then neither has the professor. He, incidentally, is a considerably younger looking man than the one who stood facing the Tac Squad some eight years later. Observe the short sideburns, the semi-crewcut style, the absence of a middle spot. He is in his tenth year as a college teacher.

The class has been meeting for a little over a month. At the moment our task is to consider Harold Taylor's essay, "Moral Values and the Experience of Art," which appeared in his excellent book, On Education and Freedom. I know of no educator who is more concerned with the personal growth and creativity of students. Now turn to some excerpts from a journal in which I recorded my impressions of that particular "educational experiment."

I had hoped that the the students would say amen to Taylor's essential point--that the experience of modern art "is one which quickens the human consciousness to a greater sensitivity of feeling and to a higher level of discrimination among ideas and emotions." Yes, well I want my students to be "quickened" by art--as I never was while growing up in the bleak hinterlands of Chicago's West Side in the Thirties. And I agree with Taylor that modern art is "dangerous to rigidity, smugness, conformity and sterility..." So I am trying to drive his thesis. But some in the class don't like, don't "get" modern art. Who needs it?

they say, with more indifference than irritation in their voices.

Art gives eyes and ears to life, I said. But no response to that bolt of wisdom.

I gather that several in the class agree with the view expressed by a not particularly talented student who sits in the front row. "Why do you need to talk about art if you can enjoy nature without it?" she said. "When I walk out of school and look up at Mt. Davidson and see sunlight on the peak, I'm experiencing something deeper than when I look at most paintings---especially the modern art kind."

So unquestionably sincere, if uninformed. She's right about Mt. Davidson, though. From our classroom, you can see it, the highest hill in the city, and it is  an impressive sight. Still, if she can be persuaded that through an informed appreciation of art, she would better see Mt. Davidson...

"Look, you seem to feel that modern art--and perhaps to a large extent traditional art as well--isn't very useful to you," I said, taking a different tack. "A moment ago I said that art gives eyes and ears to life. What do I mean? Well, let me illustrate. Last week my wife and I were taking some out-of-town friends through the city zoo. The lively exhibitionists on Monkey Island were delightfully entertaining, and so were the seals in the performing pool. But what especially attracted our attention was the children's playground. Here hundreds of youngsters were in motion on swings, slides, teeter-totters. What tremendous energy and plasticity in their movements! The human figure swinging, sliding, falling, ascending--a powerful expression

of the life force.

"Then, gradually, I realized through whose eyes I was viewing this scene--Breugel's. For the world of the zoo, despite the obvious differences in its twentieth-century patina, was not unlike the world of his wedding dance or of his studies of children at play. Breugel's art gave me eyes. Do you see?"

A few of the students apparently did not; others shrugged, as though to reply, "So what?" Still, no one aggressively challenged my views. I almost wish that this had happened. We could do with a bit of lively dissent once in a while. My students in general are likeable but passive. The familiar label "silent generation" fits. But what do they have to rebel against? Life in America ain't too bad. My job is to nudge them a little.

So at the next meeting I assumed an even more hortative stance. "It is important to know how to give yourself to the physical world. Keats, for one, knew how to sit and observe: streamers of cloud, a Grecian urn, a nightingale, the energy of a quarrel in the streets. Sometimes he was so immersed in looking that he felt he almost had no identity of his own, that he was in all the objects of his scrutiny. How many of us have learned to observe with such intensity? Were Keats living today, I do not think he would be one of those who, as was reported in the papers, watched an eclipse of the moon on television rather than look out of their windows. Nor do I think he would be inclined to dismiss new art forms as 'unnatural'.

"Go to a museum or art gallery and look at some examples of modern art," I said toward the end of the meeting. "Afterwards,

write out your impressions and submit them to me. I will look forward to reading your papers."

At the beginning of the next meeting, to keep the pressure on, I showed a superb film, "A Visit to Picasso." It traces his development as an artist from the beginning of his career, and then shows him executing a series of black and white drawings on glass. What concentration! His hands move swiftly, with authority, as though some images and their relationships were already clearly formulated in his mind. Yes, and what a comic! Often he seems to be grinning at something beyond the camera. At us? At the viewers, the gawkers, while he was doing?

The class seemed to be watching attentively. When the film was over, I invited the students to write about their responses to it. Later, going through their papers, I concluded that the film had been well received. Of course there were some predictable statements about "making a mess of the human body" but more often than not I was pleased with the tenor of their remarks. As, for example, in the following: "The childlike, not childish, quality of this man is truly amazing and probably responsible for his great art. To see such simplicity and yet such wisdom in one man's eyes is a moving experience. The joy you could see in his face while he was painting on the glass in front of the camera! He was having a good time, like he was playing a joke on us. It was exciting to watch this artist, and yet a little sad, too, as it is probably as close as most of us will ever get to the creative experience."

This student, for one, seems to have felt Picasso's "pinch of art."

I have finished reading their accounts of visits to art museums and galleries. Many still don't care for what they have seen of modern art. A few seem to have been transformed into "believers." Of all the submissions, I like best Jenkins' account, and particularly this passage: "I had stumbled into the modern art section of the museum and felt almost stunned to find myself in a room where every painting seemed to have been hatched on canvas by some long extinct monster. I was overwhelmed but I did not leave. I couldn't. I was with a friend, but it was as if he wasn't there. The other fifty paintings in the room weren't there. Only one. It seemed to fall into place. Parts of it appeared to come from corners of the frame and fit together, much as a jig-saw puzzle eventually becomes a whole. If you have ever played with a kaleidoscope, you will understand what I mean. Out of a thousand possibilities, a sudden twisting of the sphere causes a beautiful design to appear--something new. And this is what happened with the painting. What had seemed only splotches of orange, yellow and black now became shape, form, depth, color and mood. It occurred to me that what had happened was like learning a new language. At first, the words seemed to be nothing but a jumble. But as we study them, they become more familiar."

Yet if Jenkins has discovered a new language, the young woman in the front row who referred to Mt. Davidson remains unconvinced. For her Nature is still the "real thing." "I like paintings that are understandable," she wrote. "I think that nature produces the purest art. There is nothing more beautiful than flowers, waterfalls, mountains with snow-covered

tops from a distance. If I were an artist I would paint scenery and not just splash paint on a canvas. I do not see why children in kindergarten are not called artists; to me, some of their drawings look just as good as some I look at in the museum."

Admittedly, not many of the "unbelievers" in the class came to like modern art. And only a few, like Jenkins, were intensely drawn to it. Still, I continue to share Harold Taylor's view that both the teacher and the artist must attempt "to open up the way, to free the development and growth--the one in the life of the student, the other in the form and content of the arts."

"...to open up the way, to free the development and growth...in the life of the student..." I unblushingly believed that then; believed that if one looked into the great books by Mann, Joyce, Rilke, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Hesse, et al., one would become more tolerant and knowing. A book a day keeps provincialism away. And so I pressed the implications of Taylor's essay with zeal.

But today I am not overly concerned that the student be "sensitive" to works of art. Rather let his neck be stiffened so that he may be able to survive despite the crushing pressures of an age which, as Lord Bertrand Russell averred, is subject to greater dangers than any other period in recorded history. Let him read books on what is happening in city ghettos, in prisons, in the courts and in Viet Nam. Books that do not give the reader the "pinch of art" so much as the blows of social reality. Books like The Autobiography of Malcolm X and George Jackson's Soledad Brother.

Not that "Moral Values and the Experience of Art" espouses an art for art's sake position. Hardly. Then, as he is today, Taylor was urgently

concerned that a college education be "relevant." But now, a decade later, it is for me a matter of priorities. If in the late fifties and early sixties, the question of how the experience of art could be used in the service of freeing "the development and growth" of the student deserved the highest priority, in the early 70's the student and the teacher are more immediately confronted with such questions as: How shall we survive? In a century of genocide, how shall we "choose" life against death? In the face of the inhuman, how shall we remain concretely human?

So that if starting from the late fifties it were possible for me "to do it all over again," I would choose to teach the "one" thing: the importance of being "exactly human," in the sense intended by Schlossberg of Saul Bellow's The Victim:

It's bad to be less than human and it's bad to be more than human. What's more than human?.... Caesar, if you remember, in the play wanted to be like a god. Can a god have diseases?...Does a statue have wax in its ears? Naturally not. It doesn't sweat, either, except maybe blood on holidays...Less than human is the other side of it. I'll come to it. So here is the whole thing, then. Good acting is what is exactly human. And if you say I am a tough critic, you mean I have high opinion of what is human. This is my whole idea. More than human, can you have any use for life? Less than human, you don't either.

My wish to teach the importance of being "exactly human" is directly related to some material in the literature of the European Holocaust. I remember one of the darkest moments in that depressing body of eye-witness accounts, personal narratives and diaries. A witness at the

1963-64 Frankfurt trial of Auschwitz guards related the story of how a defendant, the infamous Boger, came upon a prisoner, a child, eating an apple inside one of the barracks. Grabbing him by the legs, Boger swung the boy against a wall, killing him on the spot. An hour later Boger was seen calmly eating the same apple.

Remember that story and given our situation on campus, I am inclined to teach the same content under different rubrics, through different guises, stratagems--and that content the inhuman and the human. I no longer want to accomplish "many things" in the classroom. I no longer am concerned that the student be "well-read". It is conceivable that Boger might have been a devotee of Goethe and Rilke, it is known that Goebbels, the "literary man", was. It is a fact that many blood-letting Nazis read Holderlin, Novalis and Schiller. The same hands that one day lovingly held a volume of these great poets, on the following day slaughtered women and children.

So I am not convinced that following Commencement Day our students are going to go forth morally sentient because they have had thirty to forty semester units of literature courses. They are not of necessity going to be socially conscious and more decent human beings because they have learned how to expatiate with stunning brilliance on the structural and imagistic patterns in Grapes of Wrath. I would rather be a teacher who can arouse a feeling for one single human action; that would be accomplishment enough.

To take one memorable example, examine how a "human" action is rendered in If This Is a Man, a personal account of his survival in Auschwitz by the distinguished Italian Jew, Primo Levi. He and five fellow-prisoners are scraping and cleaning the inside of an underground petrol

tank. It is cold and damp, and powder from the rusty tank burns under the eyelids of the men and coats their throats and mouths. In such a dark enclosure, through which daylight barely penetrates, Levi begins to discuss The Divine Comedy with one of his comrades, Jean, an Alsatian student. What follows is a most learned and subtle discourse on the technical complexities and richly philosophical nuances of Dante's masterpiece. Levi especially wants Jean to grasp the significance of the following lines:

Think of your breed, for brutish ignorance
Your mettle was not made; you were made men,
To follow after knowledge and excellence.

On reciting these lines, Levi feels as though he is hearing them for the first time. Momentarily, he is so carried away that he forgets where he is. Then, in a flash of recognition, he understands that this passage throws light on his circumstances and those of his fellow-prisoners. What is it that he seems to have recognized? That to be a man, in the deepest sense of the word, is to respect the human and humane in one's self and others.

Thus the bestiality of the German guards was inwardly resisted by Levi, for whom someone like Jean was not a thing, an object, but rather a sentient spirit capable of grasping the nuances of poetry and philosophy. And though the bitter knowledge of what happened in Auschwitz permeates the book, the last scene describes the healing influences of human friendship.

If there is a "message" to this story, it is that a just person must remain generously human in the face of the inhuman. It is a "message" I intend to bring to my classes.

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Yes, but that is what I profess now. Why did I have to wait until blood was spilled on campus, until I witnessed the inhuman, before formulating this intent? Doesn't this belated resolve support the familiar charge that many academics have been enjoying insular, privileged existences, that we have been oblivious to the burdens and deprivations of those whose lives in America can hardly be termed privileged? Specifically, why hadn't we been alarmed long before this by the fact that fewer and fewer black students were enrolled at the college? That would have been a human recognition. Altogether, it is as though we were sleepwalkers, and it took the screaming of police sirens to wake us from a long sleep...

Too bad, then, that I hadn't been clairvoyant enough in the late 50's and early 60's to have said to students: Put on armor and hone your will-to-survive. Gird up your loins, bad days are coming. Let's put aside these discussions about art and inner growth. Prepare to respond to the voices of racial hate that are rapidly coming toward us from the near future...

But of course I could not have been specific then, could not have spoken of, say, George Wallace and his supporters.

Fight years later, only a short while before the strike at State began, I heard those voices loud and clear.

III

CONSTITUENCY OF HATE

October 13, 1968: Earlier today my eight-year-old son Jonathan and I went to hear George Wallace of Alabama speak at the Cow Palace. This was to be his only scheduled appearance in the Bay Area, and I was curious to observe his public manner and to take a closeup look at his supporters.

From the beginning I had some question about bringing Jon there. I anticipated that at the least he would be puzzled, wondering why his father wanted to be among people whom he obviously disliked. Still, he had been at loose ends this weekend; his playmates were out of town, and my wife was visiting friends.

As we approached the Cow Palace, I felt more and more uneasy. How many anti-Wallace spectators like myself would be there? Because if only a few, we would be conspicuous. Wallace partisans might well sense that we were opposed to their man. At any rate, if trouble began, I was prepared to get Jon and myself out of there in a hurry.

Entering the main hall, one immediately observed the hoopla of Confederate caps and flags, cowboy hats and red-jacketed Wallace girls. The atmosphere was hayseed carnival. Really, I thought, this spectacle is not to be taken seriously, is more provincially bizarre than dangerous. The conditions for violence, a melee, did not seem to be present.

Then I noticed the anti-Wallace demonstrators, some two hundred in number, sitting in a section of the lower balcony. Several held signs: Fourth Reich? Hitler is Not Dead...

Many wore beads, Indian headbands, a profusion of long hair. Hippies? Their collective manner, the signs, suggested a much more organized

intent than would have been characteristic of the Now life-style young people. My hunch was that they were student activists from colleges and universities in the Bay Area; perhaps some were from San Francisco State.

Presently they began anti-Wallace catcalls. Angry faces glared in their direction. What did the demonstrators hope to accomplish by doing this? I wondered. Why were they provoking trouble?

Then, not more than five minutes after our arrival, we saw a man in his fifties strike a teen-aged boy in the face. Good-looking, beardless and beadless, the youth had suddenly emerged from among the demonstrators and moved alone through an aisle, on both sides of which were massed button-wearing Wallace supporters. He moved recklessly, crying, "Let the people speak!"

The heads of Wallace partisans wheeled around, like revolving turrets, to survey this intruder.

The older man stood up. Probably for the last hour he had been simmering, simmering while listening to the hecklers' epithets ("Wallace is a racist...a freak...sick"), to their chants ("Seig Heil!"), to their we-shall-overcome songs, to their howling, booing, stamping, catcalling.

Unmistakably, he had had it from a red-headed hippie type who kept waving a large American flag. Had it from those two black girls wearing Black Panther sweatshirts and looking superior, as if they were smirking at him. Had it even from the police, who weren't doing a damn thing about throwing those hippies out (free speech was okay for loyal Americans but not for those traitors) so that he could hear the preliminary speaker's voices, could uninterruptedly enjoy cheering whenever any of them referred to busing, impeaching Supreme Court Justice Douglas, registering

guns, winning the war in Viet Nam.

He had come there to hear his man, and now those damn commie kids were spoiling everything.

So that when he heard the chant, "Let the people speak!", something in him apparently flashed, exploded, and he charged up to the kid and struck him full force in the face, drawing blood. And even though the police immediately appeared and took him out of the hall, he had the consolation of hearing people all around him saying that he had done the right thing, that it was too bad he hadn't busted the creep's head open.

Moments later, a young man with a murderously sullen face and immensely thick arms who had been glaring darkly at the red-headed kid waving an American flag flung a compressed wad of cardboard and hit the other flush in the stomach.

And then a wild-eyed woman shook a fist at the two girls wearing Black Panther sweatshirts and screamed, "Black Pigs!"

And then the thick-armed young man viciously tore the flag out of the redhead's hands, snapped the stick in half and would have used it on the other if the police hadn't intervened.

And then a clot of men, with faces out of Hieronymus Bosch's night-time world, began screaming "Draft Dodgers!" at the hecklers.

And a cowboy-hatted young man, holding up his fingers in an obscene gesture, screamed, "We don't want you and your friends in this country."

And an elderly woman cried, "They're dirty. Give them a bath!" And watching the police lead a few of the anti-Wallace demonstrators out of an exit, she cackled, "That's it, that's it--gas 'em!"

I would have wagered that ordinarily this woman's eyes were dull; now they were glittering with excitement. A few minutes before, she had

left her seat in the stands to observe more closely what the police would do to the Wallace hecklers.

Revenge! the expression on her face said. Revenge on those stinking hippies, those commie traitors. Had she heard the rumor that a number of the demonstrators had been tear-gassed? Watching a squad of police lead a few of the anti-Wallace demonstrators through an exit, she looked almost giddy with satisfaction.

Hearing her cry "Gas 'em!" I felt outraged. If there had been a gas chamber at the Cow Palace, would she have been pleased if the some two hundred young people had been led into it and exterminated? And afterwards would she have turned her back and pretended, like the "good Germans," not to be aware of what was happening?

Wash them, cut their hair and gas 'em--this was the dynamics of her hate. The main thing was to get rid of them. She, and decent, law-abiding people like herself, didn't want their kind in this country. They were dirty, full of lice, and if they weren't disposed of, then they would contaminate clean people.

And didn't she have authority for these views from the little man who presently appeared before the bullet-proof rostrum to accuse professors and their anarchist students of treasonous acts? If elected President, he would grab those traitors by their long hair and throw them into federal prisons. Or ship them to Hanoi. Or run right over them if ever they tried to lie down with picket signs before his automobile.

He had some words of encouragement for his supporters. Pointing toward the protesters, he said, forebodingly, "You'll have to put up with this for a while but one of these days it will be over." That was a promise. Until then, these anarchists, he begrudgingly admitted, were

admitted, were allowed, under the law, to be there and to heckle him. Yes, he added, to be protected by the police, many of whom were on his side. "So just let the police enforce the law like they know it should be enforced," he enjoined them.

And with that he began to fulminate on familiar themes: busing, the Supreme Court, registering guns, winning the war in Viet Nam, law and order in the streets, desegregation, troublemaking professors...

I thought about his references to the police. Well, I had no quarrel with those who kept moving through the aisles of the lower balcony, where the demonstrators sat, on the alert to break up fights. These officers appeared to conduct themselves with an air of professional neutrality. But what made me uneasy were the distant, shadowy figures of other police who stood stiffly on guard, like stone sentinels, high up, in the farthest reaches of the upper balcony, directly under the roof. Armed with rifles, they kept watch on the scene below. It was as though they were waiting for a signal to descend the stairs and drive the protesters before them....Dimly, I sensed that what I was witnessing in the Cow Palace had some significant connection to my life at State.

"You'll have to put up with this for a while, but one of these days it will be over," Wallace had promised. It seems entirely possible to me that his words might turn out to be a prophecy. So that on a day in, say, four or eight years later his supporters--only by then doubled and perhaps even tripled in number--would again gather for a similar political rally. This time their frustrations and hates would be even more inflamed and dangerous. The man behind the rostrum would speak of necessity for a clean, white, safe America for decent folks. He would

promise to get rid of troublemaking professors and hippie students. The applause would be thunderous. In sum, the script would be virtually the same as it had been at the Cow Palace today. Except that this time the young demonstrators would not be there. Strangely, it would be as though they had disappeared, become invisible, like air--or colorless gas.

IV

UNDER PRESSURE

December 1968, just before the Christmas break: A police helicopter circles overhead while the students and I sit in an apartment near the college discussing Look Homeward, Angel. A few hundred yards from here are some five hundred police and perhaps a thousand demonstrators. Crowds are going around and around one side of the campus, shouting: "On strike! Shut it down!" The strike has been on for a month and the prospects for a settlement in the near future are not bright.

Before entering this apartment, the students and I saw a young black man slump to the sidewalk in front of the Administration Building. He lay there writhing and clutching at his eyes. He appeared to have been maced. Two black youths had bent over him, attempting to relieve his pain.

Earlier, we had seen him, in the company of other demonstrators, entering the police-guarded lobby of the Administration Building. We were not in a position to determine the intent of the demonstrators in entering the building; we do not know how they acted once they were inside the lobby; and we do not know how the police responded to their presence, do not know who provoked whom.

We reacted to this incident with a sense of horror. But not more so than to many of the shocking incidents we have witnessed on campus in the last month. Violence has become the weather of our lives; the college is being torn apart. And yet, in such an atmosphere, we are attempting to discuss works of fiction!

So now the dithyrambic cadences of Look Homeward, Angel in competition with the stentorian droning of a police helicopter; thus, Liter-

ature and the Counter-Revolution juxtaposed. How relatively innocent and and predictable Wolfe's world in the twenties compared with the conditions of this time and place!

There are some scenes in Look Homeward, Angel, particularly the justly famous scene of Ben's death, which, in ordinary circumstances, could make for absorbing discussion. And there are some significant things to be said about the romantic enthusiasm and excesses of Wolfe. But now we have to strain our attention to stay with the book. The helicopter continually reminds us of where we are.

At least half of the fifteen students in the apartment have expressed misgivings about staying in the class. Some would prefer, and have said so, to spend the hour airing the strike issues. Their need to do so is understandable, perhaps justified. Nevertheless, this afternoon I am opposed to still another discussion of the Issues; many meetings have already been given over to them, and we are woefully behind in the assigned readings for this introductory course in American literature. Besides, I am sick unto death of discussing, discussing...In being here rather than on the picket line or in a classroom on campus, each of us has taken a stand.

Anyway, today I am stubbornly determined to take a leaf from Rodin, who, according to one of his secretaries (the poet Rilke), was able to shut out all kinds of distractions while he was working. Were there disturbances, rioting in Paris? Well, he did not want to hear about these concerns of the "outer" world; he deliberately turned his back on them; would shut out everything but, say, the form of an arm that he was sculpting. He concentrated only on that arm. Nothing else existed, mattered. Sculpting that arm to the best of his ability was for him an act of supreme morality. What need, then, for him to be "socially responsible"?

That arm in space was the world, the only world, in which everything happened. Such concentration is probably a good part of the explanation for his amazing productivity. And were he alive now, no doubt he would have been able to shut out the tumult and distractions of today's campus upheavals. So, too, let this class, at least for this hour, be the only world.

This Rodinesque resolve not because I am indifferent to the aspirations of the black and other minority students on campus. At recent college convocations, I have heard their voices and recognized the validity of their views. They are justified in insisting that changes in curricula and admission criteria are long overdue at State. And I am in essential agreement with the objection of student protesters to the continuing presence of large numbers of police on campus. Indeed, that is why many of us on the faculty choose not to teach there. It is hardly praiseworthy to expound on the delicate nuances in, say, Keats' poetry while, a hundred yards off, students, for whatever reasons, are being struck down by nightsticks. Therefore, because of the prevailing conditions on campus, a sizeable portion of the faculty has elected to become, in effect, a faculty-in-exile.

It is not a way of working that I would willingly choose. Some days, as on this afternoon, we may meet in a student's apartment near the campus; and the next in the home of a sympathetic non-student who has donated the use of her place. Students have been brought to and from these "portable" classrooms in a VW bus. Sometimes there is more than one class holding forth in the same home. Hence on one occasion my class has discussed Light in August in an upstairs bedroom while directly below us, in a downstairs living-room, a colleague, in a robust voice, has

recited passages in Middle English from the Canterbury Tales. Literary catholicism under one roof. That is how it is with us these days.

Throughout this afternoon's meeting, we manage to keep the discussion centered on Look Homeward, Angel. It is a useful meeting from the standpoint of examining some of Wolfe's flaws and merits as a writer. As author of a doctoral dissertation on Wolfe, and having interviewed a number of his former friends, I also have a sense of his basic temperament and, accordingly, can guess what he would have made of the struggle at State. Which side would he have been on? Perhaps neither. Perhaps he would have been no less confused than many of us on the faculty and in the administration. He might well have been shredded by the ambiguities of our situation...

When the class is over, a few of the students linger. They look troubled, want to talk among themselves about the strike, need to do so. They want me to participate in the conversation.

Ludley speaks first. Until now he has been almost entirely reticent and impassive in class. Now there is considerable agitation in his eyes and voice. "I don't know whether it's right for me to be here now," he says sadly. "Maybe I'm being selfish. If black students can't have a good black studies program here, why should there be any program at the college? Why should business go on as usual? If people like myself keep attending classes while the strike goes on, maybe they'll never get what they need." He pauses, as though uncertain whether he ought to continue. "Also, it's hard for me to read novels now. How do you keep your mind on them? How do you give them the energy they deserve when the troubles here take so much out of you? I keep thinking what's the point of reading books when it's all happening out there,

on the line. This could be one of the most important experiences in our lives. Opportunities like this to do something for others who are deprived don't come along very often. So maybe I should go all the way. For once..." His voice trails off. "Like what the demonstrators did at the Pentagon and the Chicago convention--the thing Norman Mailer wrote about. That's putting your body on the line for something worthwhile instead of just doing nothing. I don't know..." He looks at me intently. "I like this class but I can't promise to be back next time."

I predict that he will not return. Another student lost to the barricades. Well, what can I, who am straddling a fence in the campus struggle, say to him? That he is about to make a wrong choice? Assert that, when I myself am unclear as to what my own role in the strike ought to be? I can't counsel him, can't tell Ludley what direction to take. True, I am full of Good Intentions, am steeped in indignation over the head-smashing on campus. And like all good liberals, I routinely sign my name to jargon-clogged petitions and resolutions and referendums and statements of conscience. Which, in this struggle, is, of course, to take the easy way. How much, after all, does such perfunctory academic protest cost us? We may gnash our teeth in public about the plight of minority students, but such demonstration hardly means that we are prepared to take serious risks with our careers or to sacrifice our comfortable middle-class life styles. Yes, not very many of us will put our jobs where our petitions and referendums are.

Too hard on myself? Sentiments of self-pity? White middle-class guilt? Yes, it is much easier to confess by the numbers to such omissions and lapses than to act.

Now another student questions whether classes like this one ought

to be held at all, even off campus. We are helping the racist power structure (I wince, hearing this familiar dog-tag), he argues, when we support the activities of the college. Better to shut the place down. Then, presumably for my benefit, he recites the simplistic slogan: "If you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem."

Then he has pointed words of advice for me. I ought to get off the fence, do more, take a strong stand, go out on strike in support of the minority student demands. He is not concerned about what will happen to the families of the faculty if the school is closed down and there is no salary for us. It does not concern him how we then will meet home mortgage and auto payments. That will be our problem. In any revolutionary struggle there are inequities, sacrifices. It is an interesting aside that he is single and lives in his parents' home. He does not need to work. Also, what is he doing in this class? Why isn't he on strike? Well, it seems that he needs to get three units credit in order to graduate. So he has to be practical, make compromises, accommodations...

I attempt to respond. "To begin with, I believe that our meetings are of value. Man does not live by the high-frequency excitements of revolution alone. Books are for our solitary hours. By coming together to discuss them, aren't we ratifying our trust in the primacy of the intellectual community? I want to believe that the continuity of class meetings, even in these turbulent days, can constitute a meaningful relationship between students and teachers. Bonds can be created between us; we can define and strengthen them. Further, meditating on the best that has been thought and expressed is not a passive but rather an intense activity which can have a humanizing effect on our behavior."

When I finish, the student, in a tone of icy hauteur, remarks, "Those are all very very comfortable things to tell yourself as a cover-up for not taking a stand. Why don't you face it?"

I think about that for a moment. "Well, maybe you're right," I say awkwardly. "I don't think so but maybe."

Just before leaving the apartment, he preempts the last word: "What are you doing out there, Ralph?" He has alluded to the frequently cited query that Thoreau, while locked up overnight in the Concord jail, reportedly proffered to a friend who stood outside his cell.

Translated, then: I, as representative of many fence-sitting professors, must refuse to teach.

"I won't have any respect for you if you don't join the student strike," he adds self-righteously.

How easy and uncomplicated you make it all seem, I am tempted to counter. Either/or. As though there couldn't be any other options. Still, if I liked, trusted him, I might have suggested that we go somewhere and talk. But I know that he is a member of a militant left-wing organization, one of whose openly stated objectives is to radicalize faculty members. They want to use us, and I don't want to be so used. In any event, I don't feel that we can have, at least for the time being, a relationship based on mutual trust.

In the street before the apartment, I chat briefly with a likeable young lady who has been a minority of one in the class in that she would prefer to meet on campus, though she has never insisted on her preference. She has openly identified herself as sympathizing with a certain student group which is aggressively opposed to the strike--aggressive to the point of wanting bayonets to be used against the strikers. So that now I am

surprised to hear her remark that she has begun to see that some of the strikers' demands--especially those concerned with the establishment of a school for ethnic studies and the implementation of a long-range plan to admit larger numbers of minority students--are just.

That's quite a development. Until now she has been quick to condemn some of the strikers' tactics ("I don't approve of their breaking windows and busting into classrooms to interrupt the teacher").

"Yesterday I saw a policeman clubbing a girl who was lying on the ground and this made me real mad," she confides, as though to suggest the essential reason for her altered view. She quickly adds that by tomorrow she might have an entirely different opinion. "The whole thing's so confusing. I keep changing my mind."

"Yes, well it is a confusing picture," I agree. "It's been quite an education." Saying this because I recall the voice of a black administrator at the college saying, "I feel more education has been going on here since the strike started than in the whole five years when I was a student here."

But will such education be permitted to continue? This question as a phalanx of crash-helmeted police abruptly comes into view. They apparently are on stand-by, ready to move on campus if muscle is needed there. For the moment they seem at ease. Perhaps they are bored from being inactive. Well, very likely before their working day is over they will have an opportunity to feel useful. There is no dearth of violence on campus. The summons to action will come, and then, charging onto campus, they will do their duty--isolate and suppress those who are identified as disturbers of the peace. Isolate and suppress; this pattern might well continue until the last scene in a tragic drama had

been played out...

--"comfortable..." he had said, wanting to nettle me. Too bad I hadn't felt ready to field that charge. How would other faculty have responded? There are those who simply would have terminated the discussion the moment he began to proffer advice. As it is, most are strongly opposed to almost all forms of social protest. They definitely want to see the student strike quashed. Perennial guardians of the status quo, they go about their business as though nothing has happened on campus these past few months to challenge their fundamental assumptions as educators. They neatly set themselves up as custodians of Reason and Moderation and damn campus demonstrators as "irrational" or "nihilistic." I marvel at their sure-footedness. They are never to be found on the "losing" side.

On the other hand, there are those who might have listened to this student with much more patience than I could muster. They might have concluded that though brash and unduly aggressive, he cares for the college and was airing views which one needed to hear with the heart as well as the head. It is possible. Supposing that I've done his intent a disservice, that he's truly principled and concerned? But how can I know for certain that this is the case?

I walk on, feeling depressed. It's been another long day. How much longer can we go on this way? Still, I want it too easy--want educational changes to come about painlessly.

Now I remember something that Ludley said to me one day after class: "I am confident that those of us who are strong enough to change will survive and someday come to enjoy our achievements." I wanted to share his confidence then, and I want to do so now.

Many of us are changing, I should have said to the young lady as we stood in the street after the class meeting. Yes, but specifically how shall I, as a teacher of literature, change?

V

BASEBALL PLAYER IN CHICAGO, PROFESSOR IN SAN FRANCISCO

--a teacher of literature...

Who me?

Even now, it still seems strange to hear myself described in this way. How many times over the past twenty years have I left a classroom thinking how good it is to be a teacher, that I would not trade this work for any other vocation. Even now, despite the troubles at State over the past three years, on seeing the weary, numbed faces of department store or grocery clerks, I find myself thinking: there but for the grace of... How fortunate to be exempt from the 9 to 5 punch-clock routine. To be spared having to sell merchandise across the counter. To have paid spring and Christmas and summer vacations. To have lived abroad two years on a Fulbright grant and a sabbatical leave.

Yes, and in seeing these clerks, feeling not only fortunate but uneasy also. Invariably thinking then of my father and his grocery stores, the Depression and the West Side of Chicago where we lived, the bleak grey years of struggle in the 30's and early 40's. Days of anxiety: would the cash register show us making a living that week? Would the competition down the block undercut us with the below-cost leader items? Would the circulars that I delivered from door to door in the neighborhood arrive from the printers on time, before the weekend?

My father's face always drawn, grave; a prisoner in a white jacket, standing in the center of the store and looking sadly out at the street, as though yearning for the arrival of a pardon, a release from his unending imprisonment.

"He's not cut out to be a business man," my mother would say to me,

trying to excuse my father's frequent displays of temper. Out of his unhappiness he hurled abuse at employees or, pounding on the counter, demanded that certain customers, bargain hunters who bought only below-cost specials and then were disagreeable to boot, leave the store, or dressed down a bread driver for padding the bill. Being a grocer was the price he paid for coming to America at the age of twenty. In Russia he had been a printer who liked to write poems.

My mother was a teacher in the Ukraine. She was forced to teach students in private homes, because the Czarist government discouraged Jewish youth from attending public schools. When World War I reached her small town and the German Occupation began, there were stories about the raping of Jewish girls; she spent entire days in a cellar when German soldiers were quartered in the community.

Fleeing from the persecution of Jews in his province, my father came to her town. Shortly after their marriage, having decided that there was no future for them as Jews in Russia, my parents, crossing borders at night, risking their lives, fled to the United States, to begin a new life in New York and then, more permanently, in Chicago. My mother's relatives were doing well in the grocery business, and one of them offered to teach my father the ropes. Well, why not? he thought. Better to have, in time, your own store, be your own boss than to work for someone, as he had done in New York tailor shops. He would work to attain the trinkets of American success: an apartment in a desirable neighborhood, good furniture, a Buick.

Reflections on the differences between his life as a grocer in Chicago and mine as a professor in San Francisco. As though to underscore these differences, the phrase "fathers and sons, books and base-

ball" sounds in my head...

I remember how embarrassed I was by his playing. He was stiff, clumsy, in catching or hitting a baseball. Years ago the whole family got together for picnics in the forest preserves outside of Chicago. My uncles would choose up sides and we would play a few innings of softball. I avoided the eyes of my cousins when father came up to bat, swooshing at--and invariably missing--the ball like a windmill, or when he vastly misjudged routine fly balls to the outfield.

But how stupid to have put him down for this! Should I have expected better from him as a player? While I was chasing balls in the playgrounds, he was lugging egg cases and flour sacks in the store. Ten hours a day, six days a week, year in and out he labored there, battling the A & P, accumulating cancer until 1938, when, in his 38th year, he died. I was then 15.

When he was that same age, 15, in Russia--already a bread-earner for his family--he most certainly hadn't had time for sports. And was he supposed to have played baseball on Sundays when he first came to this country? Run bases after putting in a fifty-hour-plus week in a New York tailor shop?

I did not then appreciate his drive to go to night school, to learn English. I did not appreciate his passionate attachment to books. Now I remember him resting in a bathtub, a book propped on a ledge. His feet ached from standing behind the counter; the book comforted him; he would read it far into the night. And when some of his friends, also Russian-born, came to our flat, I would hear him speaking about ideas, literature, and history with grace and authority.

Only I did not know that then--such awareness comes too late.

I was never to compliment him on how ably he caught the drift of a complex philosophical thesis or how nimbly he fielded questions during these discussions. In short, he was never to hear from me that I immensely admired him for being a self-taught man.

Something else I did not recognize. Though baseball was not his forte, he tried, gave it his best on those Sunday afternoons in the forest preserves. The muscles of his arms and shoulders, stiffly locked from dragging cartons and butter tubs, swung the bat as hard as he could; nobody could have accused him of not taking a determined cut at the ball.

I see him in the outfield, his small, slender figure bent over, looking uneasy. And when he ran to catch a fly ball, he ran with grim determination. Too grim for his son, who, at 15, was already taller by a head than the father. Why didn't he smile, kibitz a little, relax, get loose? I was too unknowing to realize that his melancholy eyes had witnessed things in Russia which were not discussed in my history classes at school or shown on the screen in the neighborhood movie theater where I went to laugh at Laurel and Hardy and cheer for Tom Mix.

And now--in my memory it is the summer of 1968--his son stands on a plot of California earth under a technicolor sky, swinging a bat. From the sidelines my two teammates, my two sons, both of whom are under twelve, are clamoring for me to get a hit. I want to impress them, to show up our opponents, to present evidence that athletic skill, American-style, is in me.

We are playing against a neighbor and his two sons. He is of Irish descent. Once good enough to play semi-pro ball, he is an endlessly better player than I; there simply is no comparison. But on this Sunday I have been lucky. In my previous three or four times at bat,

when one of his sons was pitching, I managed to make contact with the ball, hitting line-drive doubles and triples.

But not a home run. And that is what my kids want now. I dread striking out, looking foolish. Our neighbor is pitching now; this is the first time I've faced him. He has a swift, tricky delivery. I dig in at the plate, trying to remember how the National League batting champion, Roberto Clemente, rhythmically moves his left knee just before swinging the bat.

The pitcher looks determined. I am tensed, coiled. Two low and inside pitches go by; I am waiting for one a little high and a little outside. Whether by accident or design, he throws one exactly to that spot and I swing, connecting. The ball jumps out of there, going high and far over second base. Almost half-way across the world from my father's home town, where once Jews were forced to "run" on all fours for the amusement of some anti-Semitic bullies, I charge around the bases with exaggerated zeal, wanting to imitate the loping stride of American athletes. My foot touches home plate before the ball comes in from the outfield.

That is the ball game, our side has won, my sons are exultant; they lord it over the neighbor's kids. Then all of us leave the field to sit down for a picnic lunch.

But what is it that was "won"? Afterwards, I am half-tempted to say to my sons that it is not such a great thing to be able to hit a baseball, that there are other accomplishments which are worthier. That would not do. Neither they nor I was born in a Russian village where a Jewish boy was praised not for his athletic ability but rather his skill at Talmudic exegesis. We, my sons and I, American-born, are what we are. And doubtless one day soon, they will play baseball better than

their father--and will probably do pretty well with the books also.

Then what shall I tell myself--that I have it over my father both ways, as the baseball player and the professor? I suppose that this is the case, but even so, why me and not him? Is the answer quite simple? That to have been born in America rather than Russia was providential? Perhaps so. But the question persists.

VI

"DO YOU KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENING?"

February 14, 1969: The speaker was excellent. Clearly, the audience liked his talk. He was well informed, measured and modest; his presentation bodied forth the most praiseworthy qualities of the academic mind. And yet, listening to him, I began to have some strong reservations about what was happening.

He and I had been invited to speak to a group of some eighty high school teachers of English in the Bay Area. We had been asked to consider some aspect of Herman Melville's "Benito Cereno" which would be appropriate to the announced purpose of this two-day conference. These teachers were particularly interested in the question of how to teach literary works, such as "Benito Cereno," containing themes of racial conflict.

The other speaker is on the faculty at one of the larger universities in the Bay Area, and I had heard of his reputation as an able literary critic. There can be no question about his first-rate critical intelligence, but as he discoursed on the elements of violence in the story, I gradually began to understand what was troubling me. In emphasizing the effects of the violence aboard the St. Dominick, he curiously said nothing about its source. In fact, at times it appeared as though he were unwittingly condemning the victims rather than their persecutors.

I decided to attempt shaking up the audience. Ordinarily, I would not have chosen such a course of action (to begin with, I do not have a talent for "shaking up" audiences), but the last two months have hardly been ordinary.

The faculty strike has ended, and the student strike seems to be drawing to a close. In preceding weeks, the campus has been the place

of savage melees, mass arrests and TV cameras. As punishment for having gone on strike, over two hundred of us on the faculty were "separated" (a euphemism for fired) from the college and then rehired, though with a temporary loss in tenure, sick leave, sabbatical leave time and other seniority rights and privileges. Looking back at these past two months, what pains me the most is the proof of my unwillingness on at least two occasions during the campus struggle to know "what was happening". I mean my behavior in response to the arrest of a colleague, George Price, and later the mass arrest of some four hundred persons on January 23.

As to the first incident, some two hours after a fierce melee on campus, I watched, from a distance, while Price was seized and arrested on the fantastic charge that he had obstructed justice by hampering the police while they were in pursuance of their duties. I have no reason to doubt his subsequent statement in court; namely, that as he had stood observing a police patrol escort two white prisoners, someone who apparently had been standing behind him had shoved him out of line and into the path of the police. I shall never forget how the arms of this unusually kind human being and outstanding teacher were pinned behind his back, as though he were a criminal, and a nightstick rammed against his throat while he was dragged off to a paddy wagon.

I did not move from the spot. It had occurred to me that I ought to go to the paddy wagon and attempt to get my colleague released. Or at the least to make inquiries. But a cautious inner voice warned: The police are very uptight, their tempers are boiling, the atmosphere is inflammable. So don't stick your neck out. If you go there and start asking questions, they might throw you into the paddy wagon also and then accuse you of attempting to obstruct arrest. Such charges are reported to have been made before when innocents seeking Justice had politely

approached the police. You have a family; you have an obligation to your wife and children to survive. If you get arrested, who will this help? Besides, a voice in me temporized, perhaps that may not have been George-- merely looked like him. How can you be certain given the considerable distance from which you witnessed the incident?

Yes, but then what had prevented me from going to the paddy wagon to find out who the arrestee was? Nothing except my need to stay out of trouble. In all exactitude, I remained the spectator--just as months before I had stood in the doorway of a building on our campus watching the Tac Squad close in on my student Moore and others...

In the days following his arrest, after the news appeared that it indeed was George, I didn't even endeavor to find out the exact nature of the police charges against him or, more important, what would happen to his career if he stood trial and was found guilty. (Fortunately, but not before a prolonged and agonizing trial, he was cleared of the charges.) He then might well have lost his position, but I apparently did not want to be distressed by considering that possibility. I found it easier to assume that he would be able to obtain the money for legal counsel and that he would be able to weather the psychological pressures involved in undergoing such a court trial. I found it convenient, in short, to assume a good deal.

As to the second occasion when I did not want to know "what was happening", there was a young lady, a stranger, who phoned me, among other faculty members, urging that I go at once to the central police station, that I was needed to help bail out some of the four hundred plus persons who had been arrested earlier in the day (January 23) during an "illegal" (so designated by the college administration) gath-

ering on campus. She sounded hysterical, desperate. I had walked the faculty picket line; therefore she assumed that I would care, would do something toward helping the arrestees.

But I didn't know the facts, had merely seen a brief TV report of the mass arrest. Who knows, perhaps this time the police clearly had been in the right and their action had been justified. I gave the matter much thought but in the end stayed at home, telling myself that I didn't know whether any of my students (as if that should have been the criterion!) were among the arrestees. Besides, even if they were, how could I help them? My funds were limited, and even if I were to put up the \$400 necessary to bail out any one student, what about the others? On what basis would I make such a selection? Anyway, there were others on the faculty who had the financial means to aid these students and probably would. Yes, someone would help them; they would not be allowed to sit in jail. Finally, I told myself that after so many confrontations and crises on campus for the past months, I was simply bone-weary, emotionally drained, entitled to a respite. Let someone else who was younger and who, professionally, had less to lose carry the burden.

Of course I might at least have appeared at the jail to see if there was something to be done for the students. Yet I chose to forego even such a modest act of concern. What was I afraid of? Probably the risk of giving the police one more reason for identifying me as a "trouble-maker."

As it turned out, two of my students were among those arrested, and they spent a nightmarish night in jail. Thereafter, in the immediate months following the end of the strike, I was never able to see these two on campus without feeling uneasy. Had they learned that I

was asked to help and did not?

So how now should I judge myself? The fact that many other members of the faculty were no less guilty of the same sins of omission is of no consolation. I had stayed at home while the students were locked up, and no amount of fine verbal distinctions can alter or cover up that hard fact. Indeed, nine uncomplicated words can sum up what the struggle at the college was to teach me about a large part of my conduct and that of others on the faculty: we did not want to know what was happening.

When it was my turn to speak, I stated that the essential criticism to be made of Captain Delano is that he didn't want to know what was happening aboard the St. Dominick. The nature of the relationship between Benito Cereno and the slaves was visible, but he preferred not to see it. Moreover, he preferred to believe that Cereno was far superior in intelligence, morality and physical attractiveness to the black men on the ship; accordingly, it was simply appropriate that they obey and serve white men. (... "simply appropriate"--I had heard these words from a faculty member who had hotly denounced the "rush" of black students to establish a black studies program. Why couldn't they wait, be patient? Progress came gradually, through compromise and conciliation. Why were they trying to push the clock ahead so quickly and dangerously? It was simply appropriate that they be more reasonable and rational...)

In the midst of expatiating on Captain Delano's willful blindness, I suddenly recognized my true theme on coming to the sentence: "The Spanish behind--his creature before: to rush from darkness to light was the involuntary choice."

Toward the end of the story, after bidding goodbye to Cereno in the

latter's cabin, Captain Delano moves cautiously and with apprehension through a dark, narrow, tunnel-like passage below deck. He fears that Atufal, one of the slaves, might be waiting somewhere in the darkness to assault him. Hence on reaching the deck, he is relieved to see his ship in the distance, with "familiar faces on it." This sight of the known, the predictable, reassures him, and he quickly puts behind his previous apprehensiveness.

In coming to this sentence it occurred to me--and I shared this thought with the audience--that in these days of disruption many of us in the teaching profession are duplicating Captain Delano's behavior: we are rushing away from the "darkness", the pressures and dangers of campus turmoil, toward the "light", the familiar shibboleths of the academy--e.g., the primacy of formal analysis, scholarly meticulousness, traditional pedagogical guidelines. We feel ourselves to be "responsible"; it is they, the student militants, who are "irresponsible". Altogether, we seem more concerned with the destructive effects of violence than with seriously determining what our young people are up to and how we, students and faculty, might come into step with one another. Thus we escape from those very conditions which ought to challenge us to change--and change drastically--as educators; and by denying the possibilities of necessary change, we exacerbate the conditions leading to further violence and disruption.

Well, this tidy image of ourselves as paragons of responsibility and restraint won't work any longer. Certainly such a public facade no longer impresses students who are genuinely concerned about the crucial social problems of our society, for they rightly expect an educator to ask himself certain kinds of questions: What does he mean when he says "rele-

vance" or "the need for greater student participation in their own educational destinies"? Does he mean a relevancy that is in accord only with the main social currents of the time? Or can one be relevant by responsibly opposing these currents on the presumption that the tension of such opposition can be salutary? Again, has he done his homework and read not only Aristotle and Plato but also, say, Soul on Ice and Manchild in a Promised Land? Above all, in a time when many of us tend to become emotionally disassociated from some of the social conditions plaguing our society, does he live in such a way that he can respond affirmatively to the question: "Do you know what's happening?"

Thus, short of a conclusion, the gist of my remarks. (Ah yes, I profess a good deal but am hardly ready to act on the implications of my own questions. The aftermath of the strike has left most of us on the faculty exhausted and dispirited. Our need now is to be quiet for a time, to reflect on the storm that had battered the campus.) Approaching the end of the talk, I suddenly felt the need to impress upon the audience the fact that they were not hearing the words of a maverick but rather of one who has held fairly conservative and familiar notions about what should and shouldn't take place in the classroom. So to suggest to them how far the speaker had come--or, more exactly, how far recent events at the college had pushed him--I alluded to some remarks I had made in 1967, at a two-day convocation of students and faculty on campus. The stated purpose of that occasion was to discuss how the teaching programs of the college could--or whether they even should--be made more relevant to Viet Nam, the draft and the controversial issue of ROTC on campus. In those days I had a low threshold of patience for

the demands of certain groups of highly vocal students who wanted to do away with lectures, term papers, and written examinations; they would encourage photography exhibitions, interpretive dances, mimes, and other forms of non-verbal communication for expression "gut-level" reactions to works of literature.

Indeed, why should they need Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Rilke, Hamsun when they had Fellini, Bunuel, Bergman? What need for them to push through the "heavy" stretches of Dreiser's world when there is easy riding through contemporary science fiction?

These students often appeared to me as spoiled, flagrantly self-indulgent and undisciplined. They were quick to point out the hypocritical and the authoritarian practices of the above-thirty generation. They were quick to underscore the personal and professional flaws of their teachers. But had they earned the right to do so? Certainly I would have thought it impudent for any student to say to his teacher that he was uptight, that he ought to have an encounter-group relationship with students, that he ought to "get with it", ought to stop wearing straight clothes, ought to let his hair grow, ought to...

At one point during the 1967 convocation, when some students had bitterly complained that their teachers were insensitive to their needs, I rose and said something like this: "I don't want to empathize with you. I don't want to heal your psyches. I am being paid to teach literature. Which means preparation. Which means work. To take one example of what goes into the teaching of a single book, Moby Dick: Would you believe that perhaps one hundred to two hundred hours, over a period of years, has been given over to such preparation, to thinking about ways in which to enrich discussions of this incomparable masterpiece? Thus the numerous inserts--cross-references, allusions, related material--

in my desk copy. To make the study of this novel a meaningful experience is a demanding task. Why then should I have the further obligation of relating to your psychic needs? The work alone, the reading and discussion of books is--and should be--the bond between us. That is true relationship."

There had been an audible gasp from some of the students in the audience when I finished making this statement at the 1967 convocation. I suppose that it was not a common occurrence for them to see a teacher "come on" so truculently.

Two years later, on concluding the talk before the teachers, I sat down, fearing that I had been much too preachy. But to my surprise and pleasure, the applause was strong and sustained. Why so? I wondered. Simply in response to the apparent "sincerity" of the speaker? Or for his supposed courage (it had hardly been that!) in putting his job on the line during the strike? Or, hopefully, because my remarks had confirmed in them some corresponding sense of why, if not how, they need to change as teachers?

The applause was flattering but, sitting beside the lectern, I recalled the black student who, at the outset of the student strike, had spoken to our faculty about what it is that black students want. He is an eloquent speaker, and we gave him a standing ovation. To our surprise, he was annoyed and told us, in an acid tone, that such applause is a luxury for minority people like himself. They wanted us, the white faculty, to hear what he and his brothers were saying; they wanted changes, not merely token applause. So, too, at a time of upheavals on campuses, when many of us still do not want to know "what is happening", and when the hard work to earn the bare necessities of social justice

for all men is a long way before us, this applause was indeed a luxury.

VII

ON TRIAL: STUDENTS OR COMMUNITY?

May 1969: And did we know what was happening when our students went on trial? Didn't most of us on the faculty, and the community at large, absolve ourselves of all blame for their plight and turn our faces away from them...?

Today, in a city municipal courtroom, I sat in on the trial of four students who were involved in the January 23 mass arrest of some 450 persons at the college. Charged with unlawful assembly, disorderly conduct and failure to disperse, they were among the first to be tried; hundreds of other students would follow them; the courts would be busy for months to come.

I did not know any of the four students and was there as an observer, only because the mother of one of the defendants had asked me to do so. She is a friend of someone I am acquainted with, and he had given her my name as a faculty member who might be sympathetic to her daughter's situation. "Please see for yourself what is being done to those kids," she had said to me over the phone. "It's unbelievable." She sounded very distressed. I agreed to sit in on a court session or two.

Admittedly, if not for her request, I would not have considered sitting in on one of the trials. My inclination is to disassociate myself, as much as possible, from the emotional fallout of the strike's aftermath. I need to expunge the painful memories of all that turbulence. And now here was this person asking me to be vulnerable again. Yet given my professions about the importance of knowing what was happening, how could I say no to her plea?

From a seat in the back of the courtroom, I studied the defendants, three young women and one young man. All four had intelligent-looking, attractive faces. There was nothing anti-establishment about their hair styles, attire or general demeanor to ruffle even the most straight-laced jury. One could readily guess that they had been raised in typical middle-class homes.

It was not in the defendants' interests that on the witness stand sat a boyishly appealing, polite young officer who related his observations of the demonstrators during the mass arrest. Before his appearance on the stand, a film was shown of the "illegal" rally on campus that led to the police action. (At the time, such rallies had been banned by then Acting President Hayakawa; ostensibly, his reason for doing so was to prevent the strikers from disrupting classes.) The film showed demonstrators shouting "Pigs off campus!" and anti-Hayakawa and anti-Reagan obscenities. Thus there would be little question in the jury's eyes that the defendants were guilty. The sentences would be severe (perhaps as much as six months in jail and a lengthy term of probation), their severity intended to serve as a warning to other would-be troublemakers. This was not a good year for being kind to the "next" generation.

Following the testimony of the police officer, the prosecution distributed to the jury blown-up photographs of various groupings of police and students before and during the mass arrest. Then the prosecution and defense argued over whether such and such a campus path was free or blocked during particular moments, or whether the sound equipment on the roof of the administration building was sensitive to atmospheric changes and thus may have been malfunctioning when an administrator warned the demonstrators to disperse. All of these courtroom stratagems were,

I suppose, appropriate, and yet it was as though both sides were playing charades in slow motion. In slow motion the whole of what happened on January 23 was arbitrarily fractured, and the splintered parts catalogued and placed on the autopsy table.

I was remembering other moments, other images, that the playbacks of tape recorder and camera had not recaptured: blood streaming from the face of a student after he had been struck by a nightstick; a policeman flat on the ground, writhing in pain; two burly policemen kneeling on the flattened body of a slender young man near the steps of the library; students flinging rocks and cafeteria trays at an advancing unit of Tac Squaders; several officers in full-combat array running at full speed over the Commons area, as though in a bizarre twist of a Keystone Cops melodrama, after a lone young man who, in a memorable performance of brilliant broken-field running, finally outdistanced them and vanished, to the collective ovation of hundreds of onlookers; George Price, my colleague, his hands unceremoniously pinned behind his back, a nightstick jammed against his throat, being prodded by two policemen toward a paddy wagon; the charge of mounted police across a crowded intersection and over the lawns of some homes adjoining the campus in pursuit of student demonstrators; a huddled line of arrestees patiently waiting to be loaded into police vans; some student demonstrators smashing classroom windows and setting off stink bombs in the library and corridors; police on the roof of the administration building, grimly surveying with binoculars the quadrangle below (shades of the police who were at the top of the Cow Palace, surveying the crowd during the Wallace rally); the sirens and flashing red lights of ambulances, and the victims on stretchers being loaded in; the nightly recapitulation of the more dramatic, more sen-

sational aspects of the day's events on local and national TV; rumors and more rumors; the resignation of President Bob Smith; the appointment of Hayakawa; the picket lines circling the campus day after day, in the rain, the cold; police helicopters over the campus; the worried faces of faculty wives whose husbands were on strike...

Remembering also an afternoon on campus in November 1968, shortly after the beginning of the student strike.

The main auditorium: a two-day convocation had been called by black and other minority student groups so that they could publicly air their views. This was an unprecedented occasion at State: black students addressing an audience of at least ninety-five percent white faculty and students--and the speakers made good use of the opportunity. They were, for the most part, well received. It has been my experience that when even highly articulate and informed white speakers discourse on the problems of minority people, one often hears very little; their words are muffled in the absorbent of abstractions. But as these black young men spoke, one saw the ghettos, the bleak and condemned hovels of the deprived, and one heard again the angry voices sounding from the pages of The Autobiography of Malcolm X, The Wretched of the Earth, Black Rage, The Fire Next Time. They spoke about the scores of youth from minority groups waiting outside the college's gates, barred by unjust admission standards (on a 19,000-enrollment campus, the percentage of black students had dropped from eleven to four per cent over the past few years--and this over a period when the population of San Francisco and the Bay Area had doubled), the urgent need for more black faculty and black study classes, and the absolute necessity for the acceptance had been deliberated over and bounced back and forth from administrative

meeting to meeting. One speaker said, "I'm 29 and I don't have the time, year after year, to bullshit around. I'm going to be 30 and it scares the hell out of me." In sum, they tangibly brought home the alarming implications of the Kerner Commission Report's conclusion that America was "moving toward two societies: one black, one white, separate and unequal."

They are justifiably angry, I thought. We have waited too long to hear them. Perhaps if the academic community here had all along been honestly listening to them, the strike would not have occurred.

Clearly, these speakers were dedicated and disciplined. If they were struck by nightsticks in the immediate days before them, they would understand why this had to be. The dynamics of their commitment to black liberation would bring them into open confrontation with the police. What distressed me is that these courageous young men were setting themselves up for martyrdom, imprisonment. This was predictable, given the anger and desperation in their voices and their threats to the white community. They were marked men. Whether one agreed with their practices or not, they were people of talent and character; it was nothing less than tragic that, given their collision course, they would be beaten down and silenced.

On that afternoon in the auditorium, they were giving many of us in the audience, students and faculty alike, a long-delayed education. The voices of the black community had finally penetrated the heretofore soundproof walls of the college...

That was in November, and now these four young people were on trial. The woman's daughter I had come to see did not appear to be markedly

different in attire or manner from most of the other students at the college. Her conduct, as well as that of her codefendants, at least during the time I was there, scarcely suggested that they were, as the prosecutor referred to them, "dangerous fanatics"; rather, these defendants gave every impression of being thoughtful and responsible people.

What "crime" did they commit, anyway? That of actively supporting the grievances of students from minority groups? Was that such a crime? True, the college administration had decreed that public meetings on campus during a time designated as an emergency period would be considered illegal. Yet, in their own minds, by assembling on January 23, these young people were acting in the American tradition of the right to peaceful public protest and honest dissent--just as Thoreau, in refusing to pay what he considered an unjust tax, believed that he was being loyal to a higher law than the one decreed by the State of Massachusetts. They had not been silent, they had cared enough to take a stand. Isn't that what their parents and teachers and clergymen had been encouraging them to do? But now, when they were in trouble, where was the support from the general public? Not only was there an absence of such support or even at the least, understanding, but in many instances newspaper editorialists and TV commentators strongly condemned and blamed them for all of the campus turmoil. In this situation, to see the community at large rushing to get on the Law and Order bandwagon could not but hurt and anger the students. They felt that the older generation was, in effect, giving them an ultimatum: Get off our backs! We've had enough of your protesting. Now shut up and behave...

Later, in the corridor, I overheard the father of one of the defendants who had been attending every courtroom session since the be-

ginning of the trial say to another observer, "What they're doing to those kids! To go after them with such hate! Such self-righteous hatred. They will have arrest records to follow them around for the rest of their lives. Someday, in a saner time, this country will be deeply ashamed of what happened at these trials. Please don't become bitter, I tell my son. But that's foolish advice. How can he, how can the others, help feeling that their country has turned its back on them? Well, I'm proud of these young people. In my estimation they're heroes. They acted out of sincere convictions. I brought up my son to speak out. I'm glad that he does. So if anybody should, I should be one of the defendants here."

He was certain that the jury was going to find the four students guilty. "They're really going to give it to them. They want to hammer those kids into submission. But why must this be?" he asked in a deeply pained voice.

His question continues to trouble me; I sense that it is addressed not merely to the prosecutors and the court, but to the community at large.

VIII

BOOKS OR BODIES?

June 1969: Books or bodies? That was the question for many of my students during the strike. Few had the patience for reading works of literature; some wondered whether it wasn't immoral to do so in a time of confrontations and mass arrests, whether they oughtn't to leave the books and put their bodies on the picket line; by staying in school they felt that they were "copping out". Remember, for one, my former student Ludley's remark: "I keep thinking what's the point of reading books when it's all happening out there."

But was it? Three months after the end of the strike some of my students in an American literature class this semester still thought so, and their views on this question recently came to a boil. We were discussing Thoreau's essays on John Brown when a student, apparently speaking for several others, declared that Thoreau had merely written about the injustices of slavery but, unlike John Brown himself, hadn't put his body on the line.

What do you mean? I challenged him, merely written? There seems to be some confusion here. Are you saying that he was merely a writer and not a doer, that one activity was less worthy than another? Please clarify.

Now it wasn't, as I came to understand, this writer's genius that he and others in the class were questioning but rather the social value of the act of writing, itself, at a time when men like John Brown were paying the ultimate price for their actions. They seemed to want the writer not only to write but also to place himself in jeopardy, to risk going to prison if need be in order to speak out against the social abuses of his time. They seemed to be asking that the writer not only be

"relevant" but also of an heroic mold.

Their expectations disquieted me. I sensed that they were talking about academicians also. But how many of us whose sole source of income is our salary as teachers can afford to be "heroic"? Still, confining myself to the argument, I contended that when Thoreau sat down to write, he was acting; that the words on paper became shock waves that went out of Concord and around the world, ultimately touching Tolstoy, Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and many of today's student activists.

Thoreau's is a special case, they conceded. At least he did go to jail overnight, did take risks by participating in the underground railroad for runaway slaves, did try to rouse the conscience of his townspeople regarding the martyrdom of John Brown. But how could they be expected to read, say, Henry James and Hawthorne in view of what had happened on campus? Not that they are unaware of the literary merits of such books as The Scarlet Letter and Portrait of a Lady. Still, these two novels are for them shadowy, unreal; they do not reach to where this breed of students think that they are. The moral consequences of an illicit union is hardly absorbing reading for young apostles of the sexual revolution; and they dismiss Dimmesdale's anguished sense of guilt as a Calvinist hang-up. ("That was his problem," one young lady said.) Did Sin smell heinously in the nostrils of Hawthorne's countrymen? Did they sometimes see the fires of Hell leaping up to punish sinners? Well, in the students' view, true hell is Viet Nam, or the consequences of racial hate. They avowed, in short, that the situations of Dimmesdale and Hester are merely literary and make no significant connections with contemporary social reality.

They are no less impatient with Isabel Archer and do not share James' compassion for her. They compare her protected, privileged existence behind the walls of European villas and estates with the miser-

able conditions of dwellers in American urban ghettos. Further, they are not impressed by the delicacies and nuances of social interchange among James' characters. "If James were alive today," one young man said rhetorically, "would he be able to write about the violence in the streets? Or would he think such violence vulgar--one of his favorite words?"

Again, for them such books as Winesburg, Ohio, Studs Lonigan, and The Assistant are portraits of pathetically broken and hopelessly self-victimized characters, a defeatist condition that is particularly abhorrent to activist students. Travel sophisticates of the on-wheels generation are not readily sympathetic ("Did they have to stay trapped there?") to Anderson's characters, because they remain in a deteriorating hinterland community whose depressed atmosphere exacerbates their mouldering lives.

Similarly, they tend to view Studs Lonigan as a victim of self-destructive impulses. They reject the premise that "Chicago" destroyed him, that he was the victim of debilitating urban forces. His death strikes them as pathetic and not, as it does some critics, tragic. He simply did not have the intelligence and perspective to do something better with his life, they contend. Altogether, his lumpen, defensive manner is unappealing to this new life-style conscious, "easy-riding" generation.

So, too, the pinched, joyless life of Morris Bober, the grocer in Malamud's The Assistant, is unfamiliar and even alien to those beneficiaries of American affluence. Did he have to remain a grocer? they ask. Couldn't he have found an easier way of earning a living? I attempt to explain why he was trapped in a "no exit" situation, but to no avail;

they are not convinced. Finally, they are inclined to agree with Helen Bober's melancholy assessment of her father:

People liked him, but who can admire a man passing life in such a store? He buried himself in it; he didn't have the imagination to know what he was missing. He made himself a victim. He could, with a little more courage, have been more than he was.

But to return to their question, books or bodies? I maintained that although a college ought not to be a sanctuary set apart from what's happening in the streets, a protest line cannot be a valid substitute for the reading of books. So I was inclined to respond to the question in an Ecclesiastean voice, "There is a time for protest and a time for books," except that this would have sounded too pat and superciliously august. Instead, I argued that, just as in some instances an immersion in books can be used as a defense against the necessity of taking a firm position on social issues, an eagerness to put one's body on the line is not enough if the body is without adequate understanding, without an informed sense of historical facts and perspectives. Surely they had observed self-styled revolutionaries who are full of desperate intensity because they are unable to exercise a calm intelligence; who act impulsively because that is easier than to reflect on complex issues with patience and good faith. But to state the matter positively, certain books read with care could provide them with a clarified means for probing the moral center of what had happened on campus three months before.

Well, not quite. Because what in the books could have prepared us for some of the incidents that we witnessed during the strike? What could have prepared us for the sight of 600 riot-helmeted police

occupying the grounds; police helicopters circling overhead; mounted police charging demonstrators; students smashing windows, "liberating" classrooms...?

And yet even during that period of chaos, I wanted to believe that certain books addressed themselves to what had become our daily reality at State; that they pointed to ways in which we could choose, act. I was thinking of books like Camus' The Plague, Mosinski's The Painted Bird, Hochhuth's The Deputy. Powerful documents that sear through the reader's defenses, they can leave one bruised, depressed; they are not to be approached lightly. Whoever reads them does so at his own peril. But then shouldn't the act of reading certain books involve risks? Kafka, for one, thought so.

If the book we are reading does not wake us, as with a fist hammering on our skull, why then do we read it? So that it will make us happy? Good God, we would also be happy if we had no books, and such books as make us happy we could, if need be, write ourselves. But what we must have are those books which come upon us like ill-fortune, and distress us deeply, like the death of one we love better than ourselves, like suicide. A book must be an ice-axe to break the sea frozen inside us.

Kafka, who better than most writers knew the force of that axe.

In sum, I submitted that books can provide us with not the way but rather a way of pondering the human condition, and more immediately, locally, with a sharpened lens for identifying the presence and underscoring the behavior of the oppressors and their accomplices, victims and spectators, martyrs and fighters among the persons^o of the campus

struggle. But of course this abstract response to the students' question--books or bodies?--hardly disposed of it.

And that is where, at least for the time being, the issue between us rests. Still, despite their questions about the value of studying literature in a time of social upheaval, numbers of students in my American literature classes are especially drawn to Thoreau, Melville and Faulkner, and I have come to understand why this is so.

To begin with Thoreau. The broadest explanation for student interest in his writing is that he said "No" to the establishment and that he refused to be hidden among the Great Silent Majority of his time. Altogether, he is viewed as gritty and uncompromisingly honest, qualities which students deem as especially important when, in their eyes, the older generation of America is wired in falsity and hypocrisy, or, at the least, is disinclined to look too closely at itself.

In the days immediately following the strike, I could well appreciate why students often spoke of Thoreau's need to escape from the petty distractions of "civilization", to go on retreats in the woods so that he could be in touch with his deeper nature and live for the fullness of days and not, as did most of his contemporaries, for the trinkets of material goods. So, too, when these students are weary of the abrasive, high-frequency tensions of the Bay Area, the endless cycles of Issues and Confrontations, they grab their camping gear and light out for the peace of a wilderness area. There they often look at woods and lakes and mountains through eyes that Thoreau, with his genius for observation, gave them. So they would agree that he had earned the right to say: "My life as essentially belongs to the present as that of a willow tree

in the Spring."

"I prefer not to"--these words of the protagonist in Melville's "Bartleby" point to a familiar student interpretation of Moby Dick. I prefer not to stay on the "craven shore" of an insulated middle-class-dom, indulging in mindless games of the market place, frittering away my talents in petty exercises. Rather I prefer to go to sea; that is, to live existentially, to shape my own destiny--this is what they profess to hear Melville saying to them through the character of Ahab.

And so again, as in the case of Thoreau, an expression of their bias for anti-establishment stances. I should have thought that they would recognize the face of a monomaniac in Ahab's murderous rage for blood vengeance. I should have thought that they would have acknowledged that they who live by the sword, as did Ahab, die by it. But what earlier students at State, those innocent forebears of the 50's, called spiritual pride is identified by this present breed as heroically rebellious and noble. For them the whale, Moby Dick, is a symbol of institutional tyranny, of malevolent forces which oppress and diminish humanity; and they applaud Ahab's iron resolve never again to be crippled and humiliated by the white whale, never again to be its victim.

So that I could not help wondering: what Rorschach-like figures do these students perceive in Ahab? In their imaginations, does he go forth, like some intrepid knight of old, to confront the dragons of the "power structure": i.e., Governor Reagan, Hayakawa, the police? Ahab who has the courage to seek vengeance against a powerful and heartless oppressor?

Which is not to suggest that they identify with Ahab; drawn larger than life, he "comes on too strong", is beyond their scope. Ishmael

appears to be much closer to their own life-styles. They see him as "hanging loose", as a protean man in contrast to, say, the work-oriented Starbuck, whom they label as an organization man of the nineteenth century. (Useless for the instructor to point out that this practitioner of the Calvinist work ethic was in many ways a most admirable person. He did not question the accepted status quo; therefore he must be held suspect.) They further identify with Ishmael as the outsider, one of society's orphans; and like him they appear resigned to endure, to live through the dangers of our time. Just as Ishmael was the lone survivor of the Pequod disaster, they, too, despite the catastrophe of urban violence and campus disruptions and their gnawing presentiment that the world is moving toward a doomsday, are bent on survival.

The racial hate and violence in the tragic life of Joe Christmas substantially accounts for the student view that Light in August is an exceptionally relevant book. They make connections between Christmas' running along a fifteen-year-long road and the history of the black man in America, who has been driven from place to place for three hundred years and has yet, tragically, to find a home, roots. They further perceive that the murder of Christmas underscores the dependence of considerable numbers of Americans upon violence as an anodyne for their spiritual emptiness.

Specifically, they refer to the scene when the townspeople of Jefferson are avidly watching the fire that consumes the house of the "nigger lover", Miss Burden. If there hadn't been such a fire, Faulkner implies, the townspeople themselves would have felt constrained to start one, for they are more attached to death and destruction than to life

and peace. Hence, reflecting on this condition, Hightower thinks ...that people from which he sprang and among whom he lives who can never take pleasure or catastrophe or escape from either, without brawling over it. Pleasure, ecstasy, they cannot seem to bear: their escape from it is in violence, in drinking and fighting and praying; catastrophe too, the violence identical and apparently inescapable.

The students see a close connection between Christmas' assassin, Grimm, and his counterparts among the hate-cultists of American society who feed on racial prejudice. They view Grimm as disfigured by self-hatred and guilt, the guilt stemming from a cowardly inability to face himself as a man, in the largest and honorific sense of the word. And here they relate Faulkner's judgement of Grimm to Sartre's brilliant analysis of the anti-Semite (and, by extension, of other kinds of bigots) in Anti-Semite and Jew.

He is a man who is afraid. Not of the Jews, to be sure, but of himself, of his own consciousness, of his liberty, of his instincts, of his responsibilities, of solitariness, of change, of society and of the world--of everything except the Jews. He is a coward who does not want to admit his cowardice to himself; a murderer who represses and censures his tendency to murder without being able to hold it back...a malcontent who dares not revolt from fear of the consequences of his rebellion...He chooses the permanency and impenetrability of the warrior who obeys his leaders... He chooses to acquire nothing, to deserve nothing; he assumes that everything is given him as a birthright---and he is not

noble...The Jew only serves him as a pretext; elsewhere his counterpart will make use of the Negro or the man of Yellow skin...Anti-Semitism, in short, is fear of the human condition. The anti-Semite is a man who wishes to be pitiless stone, a furious torrent, a devastating thunderbolt--anything except a man.

So, too, Grimm is a man who is afraid of his own instincts and of the possibilities for change. He is, as a student stated in a term paper, "afraid of the human condition, of being, as Schlossberg in Bellow's The Victim says, 'exactly human'." And this same student added that the corrective to such destructive hate is suggested by a passage in Camus'

The Rebel:

We all carry within us our places of exile, our crimes and our ravages. But our task is not to unleash them on the world; it is to fight them in ourselves and in others...he who dedicates himself to the duration of his life, to the house he builds, to the dignity of mankind, dedicates himself to the earth and reaps from it the harvest that sows its seeds and sustains the world again and again.

If I had only one sentence in which to suggest what these three authors have in common for my students, I would say that they speak in what Lionel Trilling has called "the very voice of unpretentious truth". Is it true, is it true for me?--this is the question with which my students begin reading a book and the one with which they end it. Hence the strength of the honesty in the writings of Thoreau, Melville and Faulkner is especially infectious for these impressive young people, who unlike Sartre's bigot, are not afraid of their consciousness or responsibilities.

And in relating Grimm's murderous impulses, Byron Bunch's natural decency and Thoreau's principled individualism to the conduct of the protagonists positioned on various sides of the campus barricades, they are encouraged to recognize that the real is happening both "out there", on the line, and on the pages of certain books.

IX

AFTER CAMBODIA AND KENT STATE

May 15, 1970: Some eighteen months since the beginning of the strike. Time enough for the sound and fury of that time to have died away. But they have not. Today I had occasion to ask myself the question, "How is one to be worthy of the title Teacher when police are on campus and the faculty remains paralyzed before them?" (Isn't that the same question I might have asked of myself on November 13, 1968?) Because today the students saw their teachers submissive and immobilized before the police, heard their voices pleading, uselessly, over and over again, "Please go, please, please..."

How humiliating! How can we expect to have any credibility in our classrooms when we speak of Freedom, Courage, Principles, Commitment? Since our students have observed our pleas to the police for mercy, why should they henceforth be carried away by the fervor and elevation of our discourses on the moral imperatives of the historic moment?

Never will I forget what happened today, the tableau of some two hundred faculty members, like stiffly carved figurines, frozen before a small detachment of police. The setting was the lobby of the main auditorium on campus, several days after the tragedy at Kent State. If an uninformed visitor to the campus this afternoon had chanced to witness the incident, he might well have wondered: Why is the faculty not sitting inside the auditorium? Why do they and the students look so distraught? What are the police doing there? Why are they in a crescent-like formation before a door leading into a room directly off the lobby? Are there, as has been rumored, two students inside this room and under custody? One of the students in the lobby claims that earlier the po-

lice seized and flung to the floor two students and then dragged them into the room. But is that actually what happened or is the rumor the outgrowth of misinformation or worse--a deliberately falsified report intended to induce a confrontation?

Why are the police tensely gripping their nightsticks? this imaginary visitor would have wondered. Why are their backs stiffly arched? Who is it that they are on guard against? Certainly not the faculty members in the lobby, for the latter are petrified. And not against the students, who look angry but are obviously contained, at bay. So why do they continue to stand there, even though there seems to be no visible reason for their presence?

I could have told this imaginary visitor that it was to underscore and mock our powerlessness.

It is not difficult to comprehend why one of the officers was grinning contemptuously as he watched a faculty member pleading. "Won't you please leave now? Everything's under control. There won't be any trouble." A useless expenditure of energy to so plead. The police were under orders to stay there and would leave only when ordered to do so.

Yes, he can well smirk, for the times are on his side. Why should he respect us when for months the majority of newspapers in the state and beyond, influential politicians and others have been attacking the academic community, as though we were the cause of student disruptions?

I detested the grin on this policeman's face, but still, I can at least understand his contempt for the helplessness of the professors with their cultivated voices and large vocabularies; his need to feel superior to them is, after all, human. It's the other one, the cop with the absolutely bloodless, rigid face that is incomprehensible to me.

Over six feet, lean and hardboned, he is a frozen block of white-faced hate. At close range I have observed a man suffering from catatonic schizophrenia standing like that in a mental hospital. He did not appear to see me, even though I stood directly before him. Perhaps the sound of my voice and the silhouette of my face barely registered on him through a curtain of ice.

But why the rigid face and body of this policeman? Was our presence a red flag target for a heretofore amorphous state of self-hate regarding his failures as a man? Did he need to raise his self-esteem by lowering us, by making of us his pigeons? Whatever the explanation, surely he had heard faculty and student demonstrators described as a large cause of America's troubles. We have been labelled as the Enemy, and so now he could feel free to strike us down with impunity as orders were given him to do so. Released to strike out, he might well smash our heads without a twinge of pity, as one might crush a bug. Did he look bloodless? Well, for blood to flow in him, he required victims. Perhaps before long we will be able to accomodate his need.

Emotionally, I still cannot grasp the fact that we have become victims in so short a time. No more than eighteen months to transform us from those who at least had the illusion that they enjoyed academic freedom--that freedom was what their work was all about--into the legion of the paralyzed.

Yet there was a time when many on this faculty could and did move. Did go out on strike and stayed out for two months. Did picket-line duty during a cold, rainy January, standing beside entrances to the campus, warming their hands by fires in trash barrels. Many believed that they were walking the line to prevent further bloodshed by keeping

the striking students away from the inside of the campus. And toward this end, they were largely successful. They risked their careers, the welfare of their families. Some people called their efforts heroic, others foolish. Whatever the ultimate assessment of their role, they acted--at least most of the ones I knew did--out of honest convictions.

During those grim days, they walked the line, which sometimes numbered up to five hundred pickets. Around and around they went, up and down the streets that bordered the Humanities, Administration and Library buildings. Up and down the street before the lifelessly white stucco apartments of Parkmerced, the white Metropolitan Life Insurance housing development which borders the campus. Up and down Nineteenth Avenue, along which southbound cars moved in the direction of tidy, all-white suburban communities, where never a cry of social protest is heard. And along which northbound cars moved under the towering white cross atop Mt. Davidson--yes, whose scenic beauty had been cited by one of my students in 1960, now so many light years ago!

Something, something in the faces of the young people on the line: a radiance. How is it that after having been on the line day after day, in the rain, the cold, that they did not look dispirited, not even weary? A radiance, an expression of pride, as though they were certain that they were walking not just for themselves or for the strike, but rather for the future, for the educational and social changes they envisioned. A radiance, as though they felt that the future was flowing through their bodies.

But, alas, all too soon that radiance would go out, disappear. They would stop walking the line and return to the classrooms; the strike would be broken. But then how could they have hoped to win it when the

forces arrayed against them were so powerful? Perhaps some two hundred faculty members and a thousand students on one side, and on the other the police, the courts, the Governor, the state legislature, various politicians capitalizing on Law and Order platforms, editorial voices of the mass media. Against that vast assemblage of power, it is a miracle that their cries were even heard.

After the strike, loud and strident were the voices raised against the strikers. Samples of such utterances: A professor from a neighboring institution saying to me, "What did those goddamn strikers want anyway? Why did those black students cause all that trouble? What were they after anyway? Did they know what they wanted? Did they have a definite and constructive program in mind? Or were they just sounding off, trying to stir up everybody?"

An academician from the east coast during a professional meeting in Colorado which I attended: "You're from San Francisco State? Boy, your place sure went through something! We heard all about it in the papers and on TV. I feel sorry for what you had to put up with. The nerve of those punks booing Hayakawa! Why he was a liberal before they were even in diapers. Our colleges are full of their kind. They ought to be kicked out. The sooner the better. They're ruining American education."

A self-righteous quality in their voices that evokes the tenor of some well-known ones that have been heard from recently: "Those bums blowing up school buildings," "...effete snobs," "When dissent turns to violence, it invites tragedy." "Who has filled the students with the ideas that cause them to behave so violently?" trumpets the owner of a national chain of newspapers. "Why, it's our radically minded professors with no constructive purpose."

And then today, May 15, contrapuntal to these hostile voices, I heard the outraged, anguished one of a State student directly after the incident in the lobby of the main auditorium: "This is our campus. The cops beat us up and nobody stops them. Where is the faculty? Why aren't they helping us? Why are the cops here in the first place?"

The questions were justified. Because what crimes had been committed on campus that would warrant the presence of police? In this instance some facts are readily verifiable. The faculty had met to consider the question of whether to censor the president of the college. Unlike the presidents of many educational institutions, among them some of the country's most prestigious, Hayakawa took the position that classes at the college ought not to be reconstituted for the express purpose of allowing faculty and students to discuss the Kent State and Jackson State tragedies and the Cambodian invasion. He declared that business was to go on as usual and that all instructors not meeting their classes at their customary places and times were to be reported to the administration. In a memo of May 6, 1970 to the faculty at large, he declared: "Too many innocent students are being led down the path of anarchy" by the pressure of "radical rhetoric". Some of the faculty thought that his concern for the "innocents" was touching; others were less impressed, and many wondered where the anarchy was, since the atmosphere of the campus was subdued to the point of depression.

The resolution to censure read:

We, the faculty of San Francisco State College here assembled, do hereby censure President S.I. Hayakawa for his attempt to abridge academic freedom on this campus: to determine for the faculty as a whole what issues shall, and shall not,

be discussed in the classroom, and to encourage students to inform and bring information against their instructors for class discussion of the Indo-China war. We find his actions professionally repugnant, and in direct violation of the tradition of academic free debate on any and all issues of importance to our society. By this action of censure, we wish forcefully to indicate our lack of confidence in President Hayakawa and his stewardship of San Francisco State College.

I had no hesitation about supporting this resolution.

While the meeting was in progress, a group of some hundred students who had been peacefully standing in the lobby requested, through one of their spokesmen, permission to join us in the auditorium; they apparently wanted to listen to our deliberations.

Earlier, on the way into the auditorium, I hadn't recognized any of my students, former or present, among the young people in the lobby. Which in itself is not necessarily significant, since the college has a large enrollment and a considerable turnover of students from semester to semester. Still, my hunch is that a good portion of them had participated in the student strike. It is also a safe conjecture that few, if any, of them were cordially disposed toward the president of the college.

Well, whatever their identities, whatever their motives for being there, in a season of ubiquitous assertions about the necessity for giving students a greater of responsibility for shaping their academic lives, faculty members could hardly say no to such a modest request. It was the consensus of those faculty at the meeting that the students should be invited in, and they were.

Shortly after they began filing into the auditorium in an orderly manner, a faculty member at the back of the hall cried out that police were in the lobby and that a fracas was taking place there.

At once the chairman adjourned the meeting, the faculty rose and left the auditorium. In the lobby a young man with a bullhorn kept enjoining the students: "Keep it cool. Don't lose your cool. That's what the cops want--for us to start something. Then they can bust heads. Don't give them an excuse. Keep cool." His voice had a restraining effect.

And cool it was--so cool that we were frozen. And continued to be, even after, minutes later, the police had left the building. Then a remnant of the students and faculty who had been in the lobby went back into the auditorium and sat as though stunned. Sat there mute and shattered looking until a half-sobbing young woman broke the silence by calling the faculty cowards. She did not intend her language to be elegant. "The cops beat the shit out of us and where were you?"

We were silent. What could we have said? We had not summoned the police and did not have the power to remove them from the campus. One can understand why these students felt alone, helpless.

Alone and perhaps no less paralyzed than those faculty in the auditorium whom they had rebuked. Realistically, they know that they cannot effectively return to picketing and rallies and rushing school buildings. Face to face confrontations with the police are suicide, as many at Kent State learned. Writing to their congressmen, "working within the system"? But do those in power really want to listen to them? After all, American troops went into Cambodia, despite their protests. So how can they move, go forward? Too weak to turn things around, in a deepening

sense of despair, they perhaps will turn to rending one another. Sometimes they must see themselves as a luckless generation.

Still, if their pain and helplessness touched me, I didn't trust them as a group. If push came to shove, I sensed that they would not countenance fine distinctions from their faculty allies but rather demand blood loyalty. You are either for them or against them; and if the latter, then undeserving of pity, compassion.

As in the case of the college's former president, Robert Smith.

I shall never forget what happened at an ad hoc committee meeting on November 26, 1968, when the news came through that Smith had resigned and Hayakawa had been appointed by the trustees to take his place. Jubilant cheering, mainly from the students present, followed this announcement. Cheering as though it was they, and not the trustees, who had toppled Smith. Yet not too many days before, they had cheered when Smith, despite expressed misgivings and eschewing the hard line stance that the trustees had instructed him to take, agreed to hold a campus convocation on November 20, so student-strike spokesmen could discuss their grievances. This decision brought him under fire by the trustees and subsequently led to his resignation from the presidency. It angered me that those who had cheered the announcement apparently felt totally indifferent to Smith's private misfortune. At that moment, in my eyes, they were a despicable mob.

And yet though it is well and good to be the solitary individual, if one is only for himself? (Echoes of Rabbi's Hillel's: "If I am not for myself, who shall be for me? And if I am for myself alone, what am I?") How can an individual act effectively when the conditions he wishes to change are caused collectively? If certain social and

political conditions have brought us to a point of collective despair, attempts at reform have to be collective also...So how go it alone?

For a little while we sat in the auditorium listening to their angry, aggrieved voices, and then we rose and went our separate ways. No definite course of action had been formulated. Later, a few faculty members would register a mild protest to the administration regarding the police action; and an eye-witness report on the disturbance in the lobby would be circulated among the faculty at large.

But nothing more than that. If the police were to appear on campus again without sufficient provocation, we again would be paralyzed and our protests next to useless.

Walking across the campus, I told myself that there had to be a way, given what has been happening here these past two years--and given the circumstances of the historic moment--to change one's style and to re-define one's objectives as a teacher. Such changes that despite (perhaps because of?) the general climate of malaise on and off campus I could teach works of literature with effect. I had to find a way to do this.

Easy to say. But how?

X

AFTER AUSCHWITZ: GOING BEYOND THE TEXT

September 1970: Perhaps one possible way is by "entering" the gates of Auschwitz...In an American literature class today, I read aloud the following passage from Faulkner's Light in August, when Joe Christmas is brutally murdered:

...his face, body, all, seemed to collapse, to fall in upon himself, and from out the slashed garments about his hips and loins the pent black blood seemed to rush out of his pale body like the rush of sparks from a rising rocket...the man seemed to rise scaring into their memories forever...

After I finished reading, it is as though we had been numbed into silence by the horror of this scene in the book. And on this depressed note, the class meeting ended.

Where do we go from here? Not to further examinations of Faulkner's craft, his technical innovations. The content of this disquieting scene moves our attention beyond the text and out toward what is happening in the streets of American cities and in Southeast Asia; and for me it travels back in time to the European Holocaust, to what I have studied of and written on it. I have the need to share my reflections with the class.

But should Auschwitz be part of the content of a course in American literature? Is that what my students pay their money to hear? Question upon question as again I feel the compulsion--it has been a recurring one since November 1968--to redefine my identity as a teacher of literature.

How? Offhand, it seems to me that I can think of my role in one of three possible ways: the literary specialist, or the devotee of Beauty and the Imagination, or the moral teacher, in the Emersonian

sense of one who reaches after meaning.

Why not a combination of all three possibilities? Well, in this season of fragmented identities, I am not emotionally drawn to an eclectic posture. Probably what is needed is an unbending Kierkegaardian singleness of vision; and the strength of will to choose one identity. Yet I continue to hesitate, like one of those perennial evaders of risk whom Kierkegaard, with some acerbity, called "double-minded".

Is this really the genuine identity crises of a middle-aged academic? For haven't I already chosen the role of moral teacher (the current unpopularity of Emersonian life-styles notwithstanding) and cleared the way to move on from the literary work to twentieth century history? I feel compelled to talk about the European Holocaust, and yet, in the name of what principle, what pedagogical rationale, can I, in an American literature course, impose on students my concern with this tragedy?

All right, I may earnestly believe that it would be salutary for them to try to imagine on their pulses the anguish of the victims and survivors. But it isn't my obligation as a teacher of literature to minister to their social conscience, is it? Reality Principle One--I can't "save" students. Reality Principle Two--this class is not a public meeting in memoriam to the victims of World War II. Besides, if one insists on making the Holocaust the text, wouldn't it be far more appropriate for a historian or a sociologist or, better yet, a theologian to discourse on so non-literary a topic? A teacher of literature ought not, after all, to stray beyond the boundaries of literature.

But you don't believe that, professor, do you? A show of modesty notwithstanding, you actually believe that a student of the humane in art and life can be as well qualified to speak out on this subject as

those in other disciplines. Moreover, you believe that literature can be employed to exercise the moral conscience of its readers.

Really? After the Germans of the Hitler years who reverently turned the pages of Goethe and Schiller with one hand and with the other butchered defenseless people, you still believe, in the Matthew Arnoldian sense, that literature can significantly affect human conduct? Yes, I believe this. Take away the power of literature to nurture what is human and humane in readers and the activity of expatiating on the craft of fiction would not--in my eyes anyway--constitute an irresistably challenging and lofty calling. Analysis, interpretation and explication--what else is there? Well, apart from exercising his expertise, a teacher earns the right to be front and center in the classroom by the risks he is prepared to take--specifically, the kind of "radical risk" that the distinguished educator Harold Taylor refers to in Students Without Teachers:

The true teacher is one who can stand before the world in the full reality of his own intellectual character, affirming his authenticity by taking the radical risk that the disclosure of himself in the fullness of his certainties and ambiguities will show that he means to be what he is. When he stands that way he stands with the students, and they with him.

The importance of disclosure, of standing before the students in one's certainties and ambiguities...For if the teacher is not open, how can he conceive of the classroom as a place to catalyze changes in individual and social behavior? An overly defended man is like a wall that lets in no light, air. Moreover, it seems to me that openness is doubly important at a time when all too many voices of the academic

community are mouthing wearisome prescriptions: Don't go too far...be objective...dispassionate...tough-minded. Those who conveniently project such fashionable public postures are seldom inclined to take the "radical risk". More predictably, they play it cool and are not open to their students or to the demands of the historic moment.

But I am much too quick to prescribe? How much "openness" do I actually practice in the classroom? Being a college teacher nowadays is trying enough without looking for such risks. I multiply the still lingering after-effects of the State strike by the newspaper headlines on new national and international crises and am hesitant to employ a teaching style that would leave one too vulnerable. It's more prudent, more sparing of one's limited emotional capital, to "retrench", to be armored.

And even if I were to be more open in the classroom, such a change, in and by itself, would not be enough; the teacher also requires an angle of vision significant enough to focus and press this stance. I myself am turned toward the Holocaust of the Hitler years, for it is, in large measure, a mirror of what men were a quarter of a century ago. I may be obsessive in this, but I don't see how a teacher of the humanities can hope to be "relevant" if he hasn't done his homework on Auschwitz. And not simply by way of acquiring the well-publicized facts and statistics but rather in order to feel the flames of the Holocaust--to let it, so to speak, burn on his pillow.

This sounds extreme, perhaps. Even so, because of what happened in the Nazi death camps and walled-in ghettos, it ought to be incumbent upon this generation to be more human; and to be human is to respond in language and gesture and deed to the human and humane in others; as Saul Bellow's Herzog remarks, "...brotherhood is what makes human."

This is not to suggest, however, that only the better qualities of people are human and that cruelties are a falling-off from the norm. There is every indication that violence and aggression, not to mention the fall-out from original sin and karma, are here to stay for at least a little while longer.

My thesis is that the study of literature can help the teacher and student to understand more clearly the nature of the human and the in-human in the post-Auschwitz world. Given this presumption, I would eschew some traditional approaches of literary study to the death of Joe Christmas. I would not think it an indispensable exercise to relate this scene to certain mythic analogies in English and American literature; neither would I feel impelled to do a rigorous structural or rhetorical analysis; nor would I be inclined to count metaphors and similes. Of course, all of these are quite legitimate and "approved" pursuits for students of literature, but I doubt that they would lead to a deepened understanding of how men can be more human to one another nor encourage the kind of openness that Harold Taylor refers to.

Stated dispassionately, blood is rushing out of Christmas' mutilated body but the professor turns his back on this atrocity to indulge in literary abstractions. It is as though he has just witnessed a murder but chooses to say nothing about it; and by such omission he encourages his students to countenance one of the most prevalent iniquities of our century--the stance of the passive, unfeeling onlooker in the face of human suffering, suffering which impinges on him merely as an abstraction; the spectator whose presence, as the greatest living writer of Holocaust literature, Elie Wiesel, has written, "is evasive, and commits him less than his absence would."

Instead of being the cool one, far better would it be for the professor to respond with the emotional intensity of Pablo Picasso when, as is plainly evident in one place in Duncan's book on him, the painter reacts to a photograph of dead soldiers lying on a battlefield. There is Picasso's mouth open and his eyes outraged. He responds nakedly, with the immediacy of children; and I believe that the murder of Joe Christmas ought to elicit an equally intense response from the reader. Isn't that how Faulkner wanted this scene to affect us, so that we are as distressed as he clearly was by this hideous manifestation of the inhuman?

But wait, why so grimly polemical, professor? Why does the teacher of literature have to be all that concerned with the genocidal aspects of twentieth-century history? Isn't it enough to perceive the construction of a finely designed and subtly rendered story without going beyond the work itself into extra-literary matters? Perhaps the best that can take place between teacher and student is not through "disclosure", I-Thou meetings, but rather by way of the object (that is, the story, the poem) between them. Perhaps that object-between is how the teacher and student come to know each other in a humanizing relationship.

Put differently, if in moments of mutual concentration, a concentration that comes close to self-forgetfulness, they can both experience what is going on in the object-between, can both be aware of how its various parts are working in the total expression of the poem, the story, will they not have shared a meaningful human relationship? So, in sum, isn't it enough for the teacher and student to recognize the energy and grace of a work of literature?

Well, I believe that such an expectation, modest though it be, is

a luxury one can subscribe to the notion that the text should be made to yield its own literary significance, and that all the teacher can do is lead students to as fine a reading as possible, leaving the contemporary moment to take care of itself. True, grace and energy, beauty and imagination ought to be more than enough for this world, and yet after Auschwitz these qualities need to be repossessed through the flames of that catastrophe. (Similarly, I no longer can discourse on the delights and nuances of art while blocking out the memory of how during the strike, students, felled by nightsticks, were writhing on the ground directly under the windows of our classrooms.)

One can "enter" Auschwitz by way of the documents--eyewitness accounts, diaries, tracts, sociological and psychological studies and works of fiction--that have been written on that tragedy. To adduce what connects the murder of Joe Christmas to Nazi atrocities, I have sometimes referred in class to material in Gideon Hausner's Justice in Jerusalem; for example, the account of a witness at the Eichmann trial who recalls having observed the following incident:

Once I saw an SS officer in Ciechanów politely asking a Jewish mother in the street to let him try to appease her crying baby. With incredulity in her eyes and with trembling hands the woman delivered the infant, whereupon the Nazi smashed the baby's small head on the sharp edge of the curbstone. The mother did not even have time to cry out.

Even now, after all that we know of the Nazi mentality, it is difficult to comprehend how such an unspeakable act could occur. Very likely the SS officer was afraid to feel that this woman, whatever the differences in her appearance, language and manner, was a human being. Much easier to

see her as one of those that the beloved Führer called Untermenschen, that Himmler called vermin. Much easier to destroy her child, to bring tragedy to the mother, than to ponder the questions: Who is this woman? What is her cultural background? What were her parents and grandparents like? For to ask such questions would be to invite the risk of humanizing her. He might even discover that there were common denominators between this woman and her counterparts back home, in the Fatherland; easier for this Nazi to see the woman as an untouchable and to reduce her in his eyes to a victim without honor or a name or history; someone whose suffering and abasement justified his abuse.

My intent in referring to this material from the Eichmann trail is to cut through the woolly abstractions that often obfuscate academic discussions on the anguish of the victims. With this same intent, I have read aloud to classes an account in M. Hachiya's Hiroshima Diary, a book by a survivor who describes how after the bomb exploded in Hiroshima, he and others, dazed, numbed, walked mindlessly, as though by primitive instinct, away from the center of the blast toward the outskirts of the city.

The appearance of people was...well, they all had skins blackened by burns...They had no hair because their hair was burned, and at a glance you couldn't tell whether you were looking at them from in front or in back...their skin--not only on their hands, but on their faces and bodies too--hung down...Many of them died along the road--I can still picture them in my mind--like walking ghosts... They didn't look like people of this world...They had a special way of walking--very slowly.

And yet if student and teacher are not to be fixed in a psychological chamber of horrors or left with an unendurable image of man, the stories of such atrocities need to be counterweighted by reference to the extraordinary ways in which oppressed people turned a human face to one another. Here I'm thinking of some incidents which are described in the literature of the Holocaust: Dr. Viktor Frankl, himself ailing and exhausted, strengthening the morale of fellow-prisoners in Auschwitz (From Death-Camp to Existentialism); Eugene Heimler, as protector and teacher of sixteen children in Buchenwald, speaking to them about the goodness of men in other times and about the possibilities for a better world (Night of the Mist); Ernie Levy ministering to frightened children in a freight car moving toward a death camp (The Last of the Just), and Primo Levi and his friends, Arthur and Charles, sitting by a stove in Auschwitz, smoking cigarettes made of herbs, listening to the sounds of gunfire in the distance, all three at peace with themselves and one another, for they were beginning to change from the living-dead to men again (If This Is a Man). Thinking about the abundance of warmly human relationships that are recorded in Holocaust literature, I am inclined to agree with the view expressed in Camus' The Plague: "...what we learn in a time of pestilence: that there are more things to admire in man than to despise."

Not that merely by pointing to books like The Last of the Just, a teacher can or ought to induce students to "think positively". Who would be foolish enough to contend that twentieth-century history is one of love and compassion? Still, the fact that large numbers of the oppressed in the camps and ghettos were able to respond to the physical and spiritual needs of their comrades-in-suffering ought not to be glossed

over. And even though we cannot be certain of helping students to make the transition from considering accounts of cruelty to those of human decency, it is worth a try.

So at the next meeting of this American literature class, I may cite Faulkner's much quoted words at Stockholm: "I believe that man will prevail because he has a spirit of compassion, sacrifice and endurance." Perhaps he was thinking of those salt-of-the-earth characters in Light in August, Lena Grove and Byron Bunch, who, as the novel ends, are on the road, helping each other. The story is immersed in suffering and despair, and yet, mainly through the actions of Lena and Byron, it reminds the reader that man has the capacity to affirm human life; indeed, Faulkner's own words support this belief. During an interview in 1955, he commented on the moral force that the writer can exert.

I think the writer or the poet or the novelist should not just be a "recorder" of man--he should give man some reason to believe that man can be better than he is...And not to do this by describing merely the pleasant things--he must show the base, the evil things that man can do and still hate himself for doing it, to still prevail and endure and last; to believe always that he can be better than he probably will.

I'd like to believe that this statement can be a sustaining credo for those who, in the face of the inhuman, are determined not to succumb.